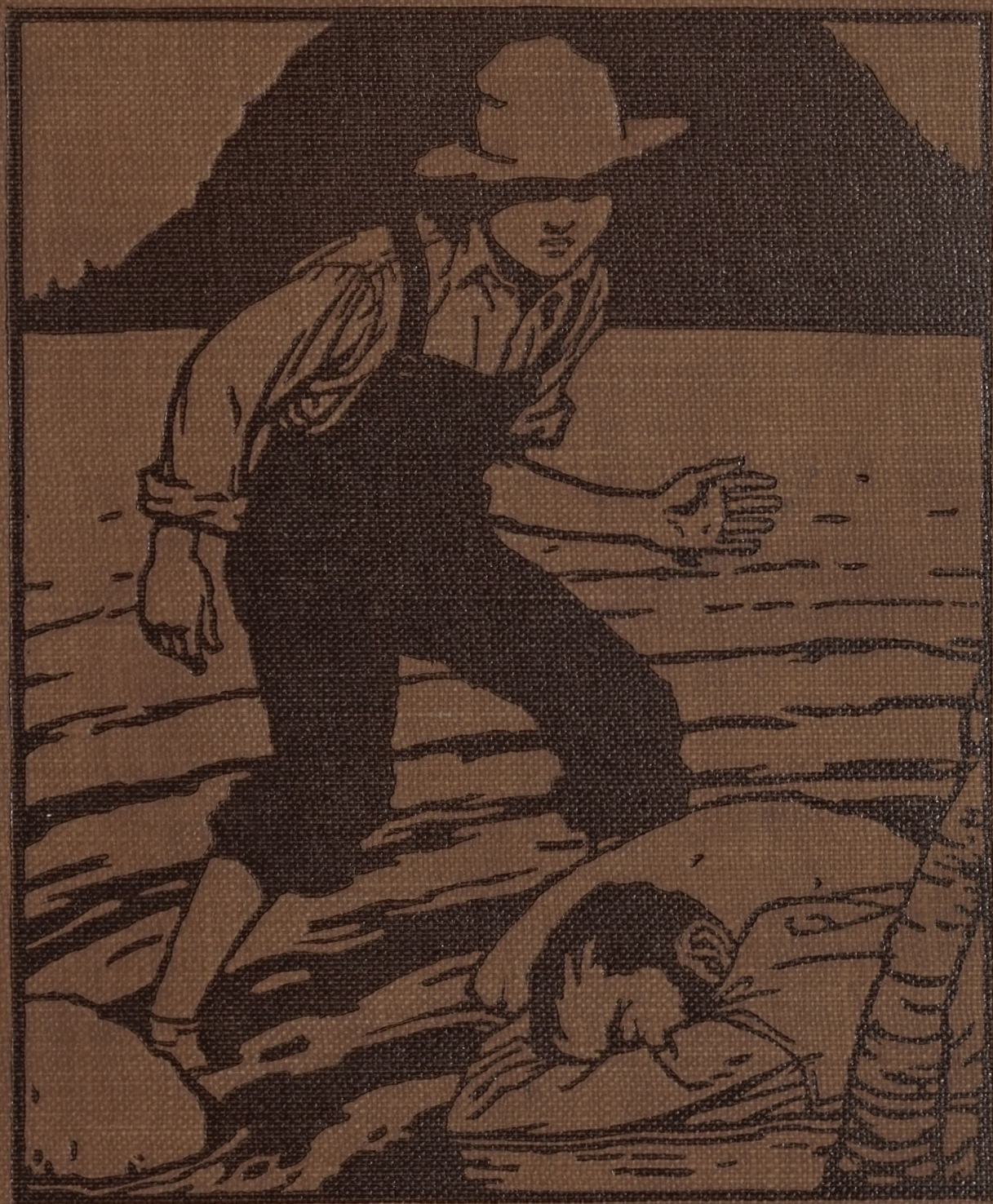


SQUAW POINT



ARLAND D. WEEKS

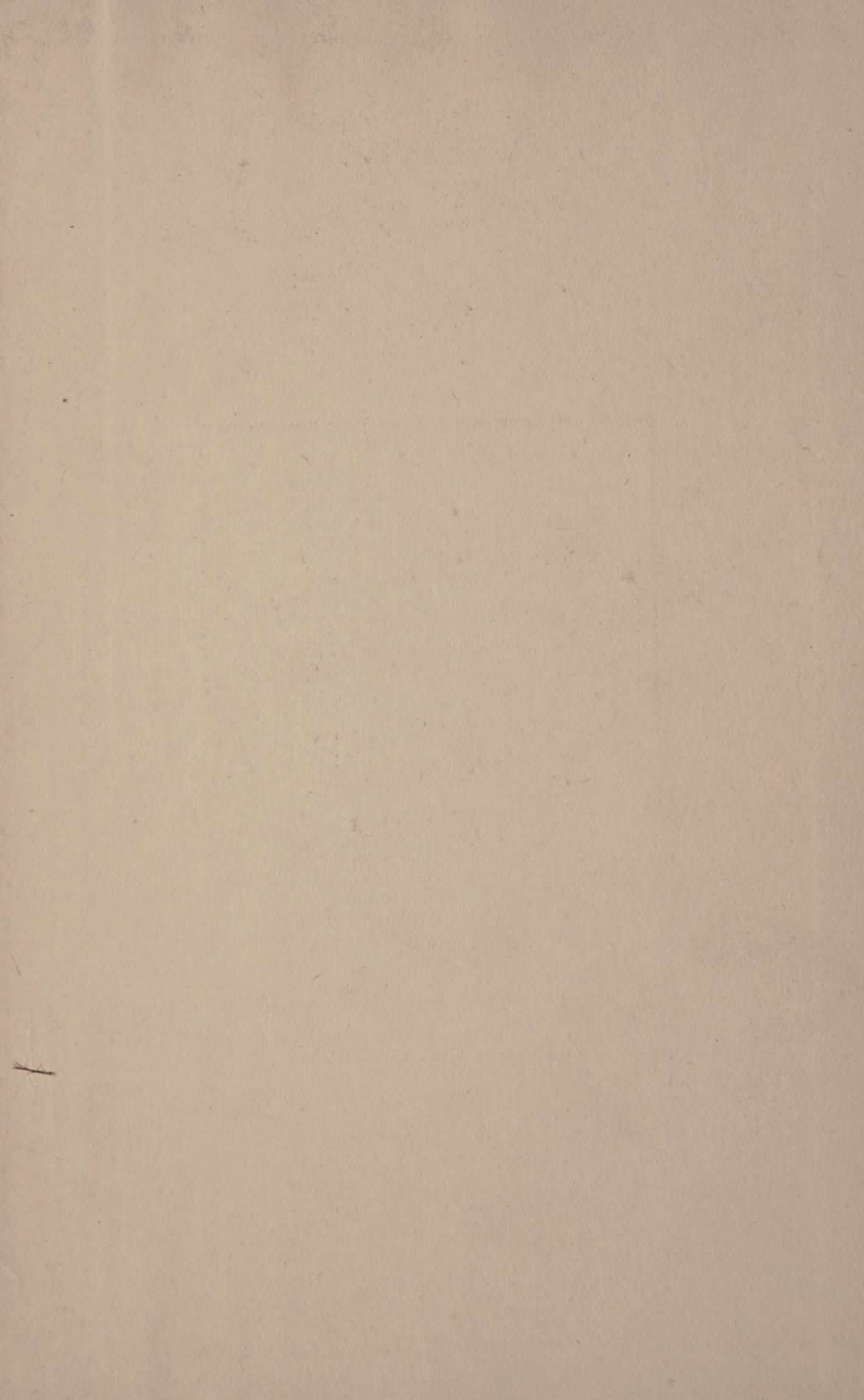


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PAUL BAILED DESPERATELY

SQUAW POINT

BY

ARLAND D. WEEKS

Author of "Play Days on Plum Blossom Creek," etc.



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TO
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SQUAW POINT

I

THE PARKER BOY

BEN LONG had lived near Squaw Point all his young life and it had never occurred to him that any one would think of coming there to spend a vacation. If he ever should have the good luck to have a vacation he knew where he would spend it. He would go to the city, to Duluth or Minneapolis. So Ben was surprised to see lumber being unloaded in the woods near Squaw Point and to learn that a family was coming to spend the summer in a new cottage.

Ben herded the cows up and down the road and saw bricks left for the chimney, and the pile of stones, brought from the lake shore, for a foundation. And then one day about four o'clock in the afternoon there were chopping and pounding, and up went a tent where the

building crew of three men were to sleep and eat during the few days required to erect a cottage.

Every day Ben stopped to see the cottage. While the workmen were there he watched them. He thought he might want to be a carpenter himself sometime, and he could not see why he could not become a carpenter if he had a kit of tools. As it was he could make things out of wood, even with the few tools to be found in Uncle Erickson's dilapidated shed. The workmen came to expect Ben to appear and a day would not have been complete without the figure of the boy in his rolled-up overalls, with built-on suspenders of the same material, his tent-like felt hat, and his hardened, thorn-proof legs and bare feet, with square-ended great toes of heroic proportions. Ben's hands bore scars from manipulating rusty barbed wire in suspending a trick pole between two poplars and getting pricked by back fins when scaling pike.

One morning at breakfast Uncle Erickson, who shaved once a week, said that he under-

stood that the Parkers, the cottage family, were coming right away. An auto truck had brought down a kerosene burner.

“Is he coming too?” asked Mrs. Erickson.

“Don’t know for sure,” replied Uncle Erickson. “He will most likely run down in his auto for Sundays. They say he is a traveling man with lots of money, two hundred a month cold cash.”

“Come easy, go easy,” was Mrs. Erickson’s comment.

“Come hard, and go easy, it is with me,” lamented Uncle Erickson, who was always enthusiastic in summer about cutting ice and keen in winter for making hay and draining swamps.

Ben listened. He had learned something. Traveling men make lots of money. Two hundred a month. That was wealth. How could a boy become a traveling man? He would watch the Parkers and catch on if he could. Ben had made up his mind that he was going to become rich if it was possible. He had been

poor, was poor, and he would look for a way out. He had thought that a million dollars would be about the right sum to have, or two hundred a month, which would amount to about the same thing. He was glad the Parkers were coming. Parties had come down to Squaw Point to shoot ducks in the fall and catch fish on Decoration Day, but the Parkers were the first family to come down to live and camp and be around where a boy could learn everything.

Ben swallowed a full capacity swallow of wheat substitutes, cleared his throat, waited for an opening in the conversation, and asked, with an attempt at maturity, "Do the Parkers have a family?"

Uncle Erickson did not know "for sure."

Mrs. Erickson supposed they must have.

"There is too much floor space for just two people," observed Ben hopefully.

"That cottage does not look so big," said Uncle Erickson.

"Twenty-eight by thirty-two," said Ben.

"Where did you get your figures?" asked Uncle.

"Paced it," said Ben.

"That's big enough," said Uncle.

"Maybe she's one of the kind that lives all over a house and has to have lots of room," ventured Mrs. Erickson.

"They shipped down a baby's crib," said Ben.

"Then they must have a baby," remarked Mrs. Erickson.

"And there was a short cot too," said Ben.

"All sorts and sizes," said Uncle. "Of course there is a family. A traveling man would not come down here and buy a frontage and put up a cottage if he did not have a family."

Ben was pleased to believe that there was a boy, to judge by the looks of things, and that he must be about Ben's own age. There was nothing by which to tell whether Ben would be able to lick him if trouble should arise. He hoped that there would not be any trouble.

Ben pictured himself and the now real Parker boy in all sorts of deals. He imagined himself and the Parker boy out in a boat together fishing. The Parker boy would get a bite and then Ben would get two. The Parker boy would pull in and have a two-pound "pick," which was Ben's name for pickerel. Then Ben would pull in and have a four-pound pick. Or the Parker boy would catch just pick all the forenoon and Ben would pull in nothing but pike, which everybody knows is better eating. They would go for bait. Ben would come back with a pail full of minnows and another pail of frogs. The Parker boy would still be looking for bait. Ben would know just where to row the boat to put it over good fishing, while the Parker boy would go here and there and not know the depth. Ben pictured himself always catching at least one more fish and swimming at least a foot farther and hitting the bulls-eye with the rifle right in the middle while the Parker boy's shots always went at least a quarter of an inch wrong. Maybe the

Parker boy could run as fast, but he could not rip right through prickly ash bushes with bare legs any better. Ben "nosed out" by a slight, if never so slight, advantage in all the imaginary competitions with the Parker boy who had not yet arrived at Squaw Point.

But he came. Ben had not guessed so far wrong after all; in fact he denied that he had guessed at all. Uncle Erickson said Ben had guessed right. Ben said he had not guessed, he knew. "All right," said Uncle, "but that is what I call guessing."

The Parker boy was more surprised than Ben when they met the first time. Ben had been doing business in his mind with the Parker boy long before the occupants of the new cottage arrived, but the Parker boy looked surprised when he met Ben in the road. Ben was just as usual, suspenders built on, old felt hat, barefooted, scarred and curious. He looked a welcome toward the strange boy, a silent one, to be sure. The Parker boy looked pained and embarrassed. He was fatter than

Ben had on shoes and black stockings and an ironed waist or shirt, such as are displayed in the front windows of a department store in a county seat. He did not look as limber as Ben felt and his skin was whitish and his cheeks seemed stiff and plump. He told Ben his name was Paul Parker. Ben did not take much of a "shine" to him, but Paul's hair was stiff as millet and grew down on his forehead and this made Ben feel better.

Paul had a pail and said his mother had asked him to go to a neighbor's and see if he could get a dozen eggs. Ben said come on, as they had eggs at their house.

"So you keep a hen—hens—at your house?" asked Paul.

Ben decided Paul was rattled and that the best way to do would be to keep him under observation for a while to see what kind of boy he was. It was clear that Paul was not what Ben had expected, and Ben's fear of the Parker boy was instantly replaced by a feeling that everybody is human after all.

“Going to live at Squaw Point?” asked Ben.

“All summer,” said Paul. “Mother needs a rest and I have been sick with the measles.”

“I’ve had ’em,” said Ben, “and all the children’s diseases, I guess. Broke my arm two years ago. Fell out of the old oak tree. I was fixing a swing rope. I was on a ladder and tried to jump the ladder along on the limb. She slipped and I made a hole in the ground.”

“Are there any Indians around here?” inquired Paul, who was beginning to sweat in his efforts to keep up with Ben over the corduroy road. Paul had not been very strong, his mother thought, and his father had been away from home a good deal, which left the family under cautious feminine influence, and all of Paul’s teachers had been women. When Paul first heard of Squaw Point he was concerned lest there be Indians there, yet he wanted to go somewhere. He had lived in town, first in a big city and then in a smaller city, ever since he could remember.

"Indians?" repeated Ben. "There are no regular Indians around here. Oh, once in a while they come back. This used to be a reservation. They come down summers sometimes. They camp on the lake and hang around for a while and then they are gone again. They have bony old horses and a lot of dogs and there are squaws and babies. Sometimes the men get drunk and raise Cain."

"Suppose they came around—the men—and made trouble? Our cottage is in a lonesome place," said Paul, his face slowly registering an understanding of a possible encounter with Indians.

"What would you do?" snorted Ben. "I don't know what you would do, but if it was me I would kick 'em good and hard in the coat tails and tell 'em to hit the trail for where they ought to be."

"Oh," said Paul, with big eyes.

"Say, that cottage of yours is in a lonesome place," said Ben, "a kind of a lonesome place. You the only man?"

“Father will be here between trips and two or three weeks at one time, and Aunt Dorothy is going to be here all the time. She is twenty-two and is Mother’s youngest sister. And that’s all, except us children. I’m the oldest.”

“Gee,” said Ben. “You’ve got a job cut out for yourself, to fight those Indians and round up the wolves and bobcats and bears and porcupines and skunks and panthers and lions and hyenas that will be up to see you.”

Paul was silent, but he kept the road. He clutched the bail of the egg pail lest the pail fall; he feared that he might collapse.

Ben felt he had taken a mean advantage of Paul. There were wolves and bobcats and Indians but not just the way Paul thought.

“Up there is Squaw Point,” said Ben, trying to introduce a cheerful note.

Paul swallowed a lump and secured enough moisture in his throat to speak.

“What’s up there?” he asked.

Ben laughed.

“Nothing’s up there,” said Ben. “Nothing

that would hurt you. The Hermit lives up there, but he's a good one. We'll go up there and see him some night. He has a telescope, and his wife died or something, and he lives up there. He owns the berry patch and a whole lot of shore."

"Would you go to see him at night?" asked Paul.

"Sure," said Ben. "That's the right time for him. He will let you look through his telescope and tell you about the stars. Do you know the earth is just nothing, the stars are so enormous?"

"I learned about stars and planets in school," remarked Paul. "I am in the eighth grade."

"That's pretty well up," observed Ben.

"There is high school coming after that too," said Paul.

"You going to that?" asked Ben.

"Yes," said Paul.

Ben did not say anything for a long while. Then he expressed the opinion that if one tried

he could possibly learn a good deal in school.

“Everybody around here,” resumed Ben, “knows Squaw Point. Some folks come thinking it’s a town or something. It’s just that big hill or mountain that rises up there and runs out into the lake. You can see it from any place on the lake. There is a road now and an auto can get in if the driver knows how. All woods and trees and gooseberry bushes. You can see everywhere when you are up on top. There are tall trees over on the other side that don’t begin to reach up to the top of Squaw Point. When the wind blows you would never know it if you are on one side of the Point and the wind is on the other. The deepest place in the whole lake is off the end of the Point, no bottom.”

“There must be some bottom,” thought Paul.

“If there is, nobody has ever found it,” said Ben.

“There’s lots of more things around here too,” said Ben. “There are the Indian graves.

They are just beyond your cottage. They used to bury dead Indians there by the thousand. They buried a big chief there once. I have heard Old Man Westby tell about it, but Uncle says he is such a liar. There are only two or three graves that you can find now, but the ground is full of bones. They plow them out and when they run the road machines they dig out more. But you mustn't handle the Indian bones rough."

"Why not?" asked Paul.

"It wouldn't do," said Ben. "Those bones have relatives, and suppose some live Indian should come out of the bushes and say, 'That's my cousin you are kicking around.' How would you feel? Like thirty cents, I guess."

Paul thought it would be better to keep away from the bones altogether.

"They say," said Ben, "that it's not right to walk on a grave. Do you know?"

Paul did not.

"It's called Squaw Point," said Ben, "because the squaws used to go there to pick ber-

ries. They dried them. There are all kinds of berries on the slopes; gooseberries till you can't rest, and raspberries. Some black raspberries, but mostly red ones. They fall off the bushes. There is an open place where maybe the Indians raised corn, but they call it Squaw Point anyhow."

However Squaw Point may have received its name, and accounts often differ, it was a sightly formation. The northwest winds, possibly for thousands and thousands of years, had come volleying upon the high face of the bluff which stood against them. The boulders at the base of the Point had been washed by waves that rose and fell long before Columbus discovered America. Big trees had grown from seeds on the top of Squaw Point and become old and had housed red squirrels and at last fallen from their own decay or been toppled over by winds of long ago, and then other seeds had grown into trees and these had grown old and in turn gone back to earth, and still more seeds and trees. Maybe a hundred

thousand years ago squaws or some kind of people picked berries of some kind on what was then the Squaw Point that was going to weather and change and become the Squaw Point of now.

Ben and Paul talked of how long ago things could have been such as they are now and decided that it must have been an empty-big time ago when the earth was first a good deal as it is now. They thought too that the time would come when we are as far back to people on the earth as the most forgotten Indians of long ago are to us right now.

Paul got a dozen of eggs and went back to the cottage. His mother was getting dinner, and Aunt Dorothy was helping and laughing a good deal, as she always did; she laughed when other people would be provoked, Dorothy had a roundish face and gray eyes, and she was always straightening her face, so she could talk, after having been laughing at something. They had been talking about something special, Mother and Aunt Dorothy. A farmer had

driven to the beach right in front of the cottage and was shoveling sand into his wagon. Mother and Dorothy did not know what to do. Mother was sure that Mr. Parker would not allow any one to take away loads of sand from in front of the cottage, and Dorothy said that the sand hauler probably thought he was doing the cottagers a favor by removing it. To be sure, Mr. Parker had bought that frontage largely because of the smooth sandy beach, where the children could play safely, but it might not occur to a farmer that city people would have any use for sand. There he was, the sand man, shoveling great dripping shovel-fuls of their precious sand into his wagon, and the women hardly knew what to do.

Paul saw the situation, and feeling the stir which comes from having escaped fearful imaginary dangers, made up his mind that now was the time to act. He would deal with the sand man. It would be easier anyhow than grappling with Indians at midnight. This was a good time to begin training. He would see

what he could do to move the sand man. He would not say a word to his mother either.

Paul set down the eggs, and with a cheek that resembled in color the eggs themselves, for they were White Leghorn, started for the beach. If the sand man had shown that he expected to be sent off it would have been easier for Paul. But if ever there was a man in a state of innocence it was the sand man. Paul saw every feature of the sand man and remembered for days afterward. There was the sand man's cap; it was a white cap, with not a wrinkle of goods to spare and with an economical visor; on it was printed an appeal to use a certain brand of coffee. The sand man had a beard, sharp pointed, not like a kind farmer's beard. The man was long and bony and might be angry if spoken to.

Paul went quite near but not near enough to make the man hear what he said, which was, "This sand belongs to us." The sand man took no notice whatever. Paul went nearer and said in a loud voice, "This sand belongs to us."

The sand man stopped shoveling and looked.

Paul braced himself and said, "We would like to have you get your sand somewhere else."

The man looked at Paul and Paul nearly fainted.

"Oh, ya," said the sand man and he picked up the reins and clucked to the horses and went farther along the beach.

But the Parker boy felt a little more like the man the camp ought to have around for emergencies; and he felt a stronger desire to see Ben Long again.

II

AT THE HERMIT'S

BEN had told Paul about the Hermit, who lived on the top of Squaw Point, and the boys went up one evening. The Hermit lived on the top of Squaw Point, but as the top of this geographical formation was not all in one place, there was a good deal of top on which the Hermit did not live. His log cabin was among the trees and in a place from which the Hermit could see the long sweep of the lake and view the heavens with his telescope, which last occupation was his delight. He had great dark eyes, with a baggy appearance beneath them, and his voice was soft and pleasing. He moved slowly and always seemed to be thinking out something, astronomy probably.

The Hermit had once been a salesman for a big publishing house and had put up at the best

hotels. He knew about Pullman cars and everything like that. How in the world a man of his ability should have come to live on Squaw Point was something that people never stopped talking about. They were glad to have him there, too. The Hermit seemed pleased to have people come to see him, and he would quote poetry to the boys.

The evening Paul and Ben were at the Hermit's, Old Man Westby had dropped in and also Bill Olson. The three men sat on a bench outside the cabin and the boys leaned against trees when not seated on the ground.

Old Man Westby did most of the talking. He told his well-known panther story. It was new to Paul. When Westby and his wife, so the story ran, first came to live near Squaw Point the woods were full of wild animals. You could set a wolf trap and have something in it the next morning. Chickens, turkeys and lambs were taken night after night. It was a good idea to have a rifle along when grubbing out stumps. You might get a good shot any time.

The twilight was deepening and Paul moved closer to the bench. He was interested.

One night, said Westby, he and his wife and their first baby were at a neighbor's a mile away. The first thing they knew it was twelve o'clock and dark as a pocket, with only a faint light above the line of the tree tops and bluffs. There was no moon. The people where they were calling wanted the Westbys to stay all night. Old Man Westby was then a young man and was not afraid of the devil himself. But he did wish he had brought a gun along. He had his lantern. He shook his lantern to see how much oil there was in it, lighted it and said good-night and started through the woods.

Everybody listened as Westby went on with his story, even those who had heard it before. Paul knew that Westby had not been killed, for here he was, alive to tell the story. Old Man Westby sat back in his chair, now holding out his pipe in gnarly fingers, now gathering his audience to himself with a look of wrinkled

animation, and continued his story, sometimes pausing to straighten out a detail. The light was so dim that every word counted, only the darkish outline of Westby's head and the still darker aperture of his opened mouth showing with anything like distinctness.

Well, Westby, wife and baby started home at midnight through the Minnesota woods, in the early days, before the game had been driven away by settlers. Westby went ahead with the lighted lantern, but the oil was low and he expected the flame would flutter and go out any minute. Oil was dear in those days. A gallon cost nearly as much as a settler could get for a bushel of wheat. If the lantern should go out, there would be something—Westby specified what—to pay, for a timber wolf or a lynx might smell the baby and get busy. Mrs. Westby followed behind, her husband carrying the baby as well as the lighted lantern.

They got about halfway home when the baby began to cry. It would not hush up. Pretty soon there was an echo, at least they thought

it was an echo. They heard the baby's cry come back to them. But no, it could not be an echo. There was nothing for the baby's cry to echo against, not at that point in the trail. They were going through a thick undergrowth of popple and willows on a sandy flat, too far from the bluffs to get an echo. Anyhow the sound was not just like an echo. Then Westby thought it might be another baby crying. But there was not a building nearer than their own. Then it dawned on Westby what it was. It was—a *panther answering the baby!* When Westby knew what the sound came from the hair stood straight up on his head and he could feel prickles all up and down his sides and back.

“You weren't afraid?” said the Hermit.

“Wasn't I?” replied Old Man Westby. “You bet I was. I nearly dropped dead. I was afraid my lantern would go out.”

Westby resumed. A panther is the worst of them all. They have lots of nerve. But all wild animals are leery of a light and if the

lantern held out they would get home all right, probably. Westby asked his wife to keep close up behind and on they went. The baby cried and cried. Westby put his hand over her mouth, but she yelled worse than ever, and the panther *answered!* The panther must have thought the baby's cry was that of another panther, for the panther's cry is like that of a baby. They were a long way from home yet and the panther's cry was coming nearer all the time. When the baby let up the panther would cry twice, as if he was afraid he might lose connections. And when the baby cried again the panther would move up a peg or two the next time it called. The lantern was still lighted and Westby counted on that to frighten the beast away if it should come closer. They were within a quarter of a mile of the house when there was a crashing in the bushes and an animal dashed across the trail just ahead of them. It was the panther. It had come to where the baby cried, and seeing the light had made off without attacking.

“And the lantern stayed lighted,” said Bill Olson, after a long pause.

“It went out the minute I set it down inside the door,” replied Westby, thankful for the question.

“Oh, there’s animals about these parts yet,” said Bill Olson. “I’ve seen tracks of some wild beast in the mud on Duck Lake. It had a paw bigger than a man’s hand.”

“Lynx,” said Old Man Westby.

“There’s a pair of coyotes over in the big swamp,” said Bill.

“But the game is pretty well run out now,” said Westby. “A few wolves and coyotes, and perhaps a bobcat now and then. A bobcat would not be so bad if he did not stay in trees ready to drop on you.”

“The man on the Dale farm saw bears in the road the other night,” said Bill. “Big as life, right in the road. Ran his auto right up to them. Two old bears and a cub.”

“Yes,” said Westby, “the same bears that Henry Sears shot one of.”

"Did he shoot one?" asked Bill.

"Shot a bear and killed a dog," said Westby.

"You don't say," said Bill, crushed.

It was getting late and Ben and Paul started home. At first they were silent. Then Paul told Ben about the fraternities in the high school that he was going to attend in the fall. There were all sorts of stunts, he told Ben, funny things they made the boys do before they could be members. Ben had never heard of fraternities and thought they were not much good, but the talk gave him an idea. The idea was that of initiation. He would think that over. He might want to get up an initiation himself.

As the boys went away from the Hermit's the road under the trees seemed to become darker and darker.

"Are you afraid?" asked Paul.

"Not a bit," said Ben.

"But suppose an animal should come at us?"

"That is not likely," said Ben. "Most of

the animals they talked about are dead. They are animals that used to be."

"But the others?" asked Paul.

"Some of them are not animals," said Ben. "They are like Bill Olson's bears; they are dogs or cats or just mistakes."

"But the rest of them are real," thought Paul. "Leave out the dead ones and the mistakes and then there are enough left to make a person careful."

"Let me tell you something," said Ben. "It's not animals you are afraid of, but the pictures."

Paul was interested but not convinced.

"It's like this," explained Ben. "You and I go up to the Hermit's and Bill Olson and Old Man Westby talk animals. Then we think animals. It used to scare me stiff, but I cured myself."

"Tell me how," besought Paul. "I am not afraid of animals, not especially, but I'd be glad to know how you keep from being scared."

"It's not animals that scare you, but pic-

tures," resumed Ben. "Talk about animals and your mind makes pictures of them. Then you walk home at night and you see the pictures and get scared of them. There might not be an animal within forty miles and you might be scared stiff, all because you had pictures in your mind."

Paul felt relieved but not fully emancipated.

"Suppose you put all the pictures out of your mind, you would not be scared," said Paul. "Then suppose a real animal jumped down on your head, a bobcat."

"He might rip your ears off," responded Ben, "but just the same you would not have been scared, not at first anyhow."

"But your ears would be gone," argued Paul.

"Oh, you might lose an ear now and then," said Ben, "but that would be better than being scared all the time."

As the boys went along the dark road Paul saw things that looked strange enough to him. Then he would look somewhere else and

for a moment forget what had startled him. He might forget entirely if he did not look twice. But if he did not look a second time he would feel prickly. He had so many pictures in his mind that trees and stumps and rocks, which probably Ben was passing without seeing resemblances, looked to Paul like a menagerie drawn up for review on both sides of a fearful avenue.

"We have electric lights in town," remarked Paul.

"No need of them here," replied Ben. "There's the north star. You can go by that. The Hermit told me about that. Then if you know the road you can tell how far you have to go, from the feel of it."

The boys were nearing an old building by the road. Something moved and Paul clutched Ben's arm.

Ben whistled and a dog came alongside.

"Try 'em first with a whistle," said Ben. "If they aren't dogs they are pigs or calves or cats or sheep or something else."

Ben left Paul almost within hearing distance of the cottage and the latter lost no time in covering the intervening space. It was lonesome around Squaw Point after dark and it took city people a little while to become used to being in the dark and alone at that. After Paul had scampered off on the sandy road Ben thought what Paul needed was a good jacking up. He needs to get the scare out of him, thought Ben, who concluded that it was his duty to take hold of Paul and straighten him out, for he liked him, largely because he did not put on airs. Ben thought that if he could only get the scare out of Paul they would have a better time. "He's a good little geezer," said Ben to himself, "but he needs more spunk. He's afraid of his shadow."

Ben and Paul met soon after and Ben spoke about hardening oneself. "Take your legs," said Ben. "They are tender. Run them through the bushes for a month and they are just like wire. Feet the same way. In the spring they feel everything. Go without shoes

for a while and your feet sound like hoofs when you walk on a floor. Same with swimming. The first time you go into the water it feels like a chunk of ice. But when you've been in a half a dozen times your skin seems to thicken up and you can stand a lot of cold water."

"I'd like to harden up," assented Paul.

"You're too scared of things," said Ben.

"I know it," said Paul. "I want to harden up that way too. I don't want to be a sissy."

"Maybe I can help you," said Ben. "I am used to everything around here. But you must do as I say. That will be the best way."

"Do you think I better be hardened up outside or inside first?" asked Paul.

"I'll work the two along together," replied Ben.

The boys were passing a pasture inclosed by a wire fence. Paul had usually peeled his eye as he passed that pasture, for he was afraid of bulls. If he had dreamed that the hardening process was due to begin at once and that

the pasture was to be the scene of the first lesson Paul would possibly not have contracted for lessons. We often pledge for reforms and severities, expecting that they will be deferred for a comfortable length of time.

"That bull's a buster," said Paul, pointing to the speckled monster within the wire fence.

"You're right he is," said Ben. "He could run a horn through you so far you could hang your hat on the other side."

"Is he cross?" asked Paul.

"No bull likes red," replied Ben.

"I'm glad there's a wire fence around him," said Paul with a great relief.

"That fence won't do you a bit of good," said Ben, looking Paul in the eyes.

"What do you mean?" asked Paul, frightened.

"You are going through that pasture," said Ben.

"You'll go with me," gasped Paul.

"Not on your life," said Ben. "You are going through that pasture all by yourself. I'll

tell you what to do and you do it. In five minutes you are going into the pasture at this gate and you are going across to the other side, on a walk, see? If you run, the chances will be so much worse.”

“Oh, Ben.”

“Oh nothing, are you ready?”

“The bull will kill me,” sobbed Paul, terrorized.

“Do you think I’d let him kill you?” asked Ben. “You trust me. Are you ready?”

Paul did not know what to do. He had made up his mind to take a course of Ben’s hardening, but this was too much. During Ben’s conversation with Paul the great animal within the pasture seemed to stand ready to devour, trample and exterminate. It grazed and at times turned languidly with an air of colossal supremacy, seeming to keep an eye on the boys, as if to be in a position to charge should an intruder appear. Paul stood almost paralyzed between the moral force represented by Ben Long and the brute danger within the pasture.

"Tell Mother," said Paul, with dry lips, for he had made up his mind to do as Ben said.

"If I should not get across, tell her about it."

"Oh, you'll get across all right," said Ben.

"I've been across lots of times. But you better pick out a place in the fence on the other side for a quick get over."

"But there's red in my tie," said Paul, his face blanched.

"That's a fact," acknowledged Ben. "I didn't think about that. It's lucky you thought about it. Bulls and red can't live in the same field. Take it off."

Paul took off his tie.

"Are you ready now?" asked Ben impatiently.

Paul, sick, nodded.

"No you aren't, either," said Ben. "The place you are looking at in the fence on the other side has rotten posts. You go to climbing up those posts and they would break off and the bull would come along and lift you the rest of the way."

"I didn't know that," gasped Paul.

"How you going across?" asked Ben, by way of catechism.

"Any way," said Paul. "As fast as I can run."

"Wrong again," said Ben. "You are going to walk, hear me, walk, across that pasture. Don't you run a step, that's my advice and it's my say-so. If you run or go faster than a slow walk I won't say what will happen. I will tell you when to start and how fast to go and when to climb the fence. A bull won't attack you if you don't show fear, anyhow this animal won't. Lots of times you have to go across pastures and you ought to know how. Do just as I say. In you go."

Paul reeled with heartsickness but went through the gate, which Ben held open. He fixed his eyes on a place in the fence opposite and kept his eyes straight ahead. He wanted to run. He became stiff-legged and he turned his eyes toward the animal but kept his head from turning. Ben called to him that he was



"NOW TURN AROUND AND WALK BACK," SHOUTED BEN

doing well and the sound startled him terribly, as at first he thought it was the bull. As he neared the fence his pace increased in spite of efforts to walk slowly. He was just about to mount the woven and barbed wire fence when he heard Ben call. He feared it was to tell him the bull had started for him.

“Now turn around and walk back,” shouted Ben.

At first Paul thought he would not “hear,” but something within seemed dissatisfied with that, so he removed his hands from the fence for which they itched and turned back. Coming back, Paul had the bull more in his eye and he felt less fear. In fact, as he approached the gate he slowed down considerably and might have given one the impression that going through bull pastures was an everyday occurrence for him.

“Good boy,” said Ben and slapped Paul on the back. “Didn’t get killed, did you?”

“I’m glad I didn’t,” said Paul. “I’m glad now anyhow. Mother will be glad too, when

she hears how I went through the bull pasture.”

“She might give you a licking,” said Ben.

Paul, recovering his spirits, chattered about his exploit. He had gone through the bull pasture with the bull present. He had not been attacked or killed, though he might have been, by the ferocious bull.

“That wasn’t a bull,” said Ben. “That’s an old steer that Uncle is pasturing for a man. He wouldn’t hurt a fly—too lazy to switch his tail.”

“I thought it was a bull,” said Paul.

“It was a bull to you all right,” replied Ben. “I thought the old steer would do well enough for a fraternity stunt, an initiation.”

III

RICHES

BEN and Paul were both busy these days. Paul ranged about the two-acre tract where the cottage was and gathered wood for the stove. His father had bought him an ax bigger than a hatchet and smaller than a man's ax and he was learning how to swing this and to chop where he looked. The woods were full of dead limbs, pine knots from decayed logs, and trees that had fallen, which afforded a wealth of fuel. Paul was learning the names of the trees. When no one at the cottage knew he would ask Ben and if Ben did not know they would ask the Hermit. Paul's mother knew a good many trees, especially those that grow in Massachusetts, and Aunt Dorothy was pretty good at getting the names right.

Ben helped Uncle Erickson in the hayfield and

in the corn. But Uncle Erickson was given to finding reasons for not working with regularity and Ben had leisure. The two boys went about together and talked about what they would do with a million dollars. Paul thought he would buy a hundred automobiles and have men to take care of them and run them. Ben wanted a motor boat and somebody to teach him French. He thought that if he could speak French he would like to travel round and round the world and do nothing else. He'd talk French, too, where Dorothy would overhear him and be surprised.

Bill Olson used to talk with the boys. Bill had promised himself that he would have a cottage on the lake. Bill had been raised on the lake and had picked berries there as a boy. Got his spending money and money for his clothes that way. That was thirty years ago. He now lived on his farm four miles back from the lake, an old bachelor, pretty prosperous with wheat at two dollars a bushel. Bill liked trees, and, since cottagers had begun to appear

at Squaw Point, deemed it might be advisable to buy a frontage down there himself. No, he had not bought land yet, but he might later, and in the meantime he was looking around. About every Sunday Bill would be seen at the Point, besides some week-day nights when he came down to Uncle Erickson's.

One warm and lustrous Sunday in late July the boys were going through the woods and ran upon Bill Olson. Bill was looking for a good lot among those that Uncle Erickson had staked out for possible purchasers.

Bill was crushing something in his hand and then he would smell his palm. The something was buds from a small tree. He would pick and crush and smell and then do it all over again, greatly intent. The boys looked and waited.

"Do you know what kind of tree that is?" he asked with an air of immense elation.

Ben thought it was a popple with yellowish leaves. Paul said it might be maple.

"No siree," said Bill.

“What is it?” asked Ben.

“It’s bammigan,” said Bill. “Bammigan, sure as fate. The real thing. Great stuff that. If I had a lake lot I wouldn’t cut a stick of that. Bammigan, bammigan.”

“What’s bammigan?” mused Ben.

“I’ve smelled that somewhere before,” said Paul.

“Maybe it’s a medicine,” said Ben.

“I know now,” said Paul. “One of my teachers brought some to class. But she didn’t call it that. It was—it was—balm of something or other. Oh, I’ve got it now; it was balm of Gilead. There’s an old man that sings about the balm of Gilead and I’ve heard about it in Uncle’s drugstore.”

Bill had passed out of sight and the boys picked more buds and smelled the tonic odor and pinched their fingers together through the sticky balsam.

“Isn’t that worth something?” asked Ben, who now wanted to be worth two million dollars or twice as well off as a traveling man.

“If it’s a great medicine it’s worth something,” said Paul. “And people would not sing about it, especially in church, if it was not able to cure disease and perhaps work miracles.”

“Do you think Bill Olson knows how much that stuff is worth?” asked Ben.

“He knows it’s worth something,” thought Paul, “but he probably does not know its full value. If he did he would have the name right. He’s ignorant of its real nature. He said he wouldn’t cut the trees, but he seemed to care more for the smell than anything else.”

“Do you know what I think?” exclaimed Ben. “Bill Olson is just bluffing about trees. He has seen Dorothy and he’s coming around here looking for lots and talking trees. He’s lived here all these years and just now it’s all trees and lake lots for him. Bill Olson never could learn French, even if he had a teacher, and it would make Dorothy snicker to hear an old codger like Bill Olson try to speak it where she could overhear it. Paul, when is the best time to learn French?”

“When you are young,” said Paul.

“Thirteen or fourteen years old up to twenty, that’s what I thought,” was Ben’s comment.

Ben was silent a long time. They went single file over the path, followed so often by Uncle Erickson’s cows and in more recent years by the Hermit’s pigs, which this year were two reddish specimens of the speed of a race horse. If you ran upon one of those pigs it would “woof” and shoot off without taking time for a start, in which it resembled partridges. The path led under heavy pines, where the ground was brown and slippery with pine needles and along low ground, where the balm of Gilead trees were a dense thicket.

“Paul,” said Ben, “do you want to be rich? ”

“I never thought much about it,” said Paul. “Mother has always bought my clothes. But if I was rich I would buy a different kind of clothes. They buy my shoes two sizes too big,

and Father backs up Mother after she has bought me things to wear. If I had money I'd go to a clothing store and ask for things that would fit exactly and when these were gone I'd go down again and get more clothes."

"I'd like to be rich," said Ben. "Besides going round and round the world and learning French I'd like to have people see me go by. I'd come back to Squaw Point and let people see me. Maybe the same people would be here then that are here now. They'd look up and say, 'Who's that?' and somebody would say, 'That's Ben Long, that used to live here. He's rotten rich and can speak foreign languages. Travels a good deal—been all round the world.' Then I would come around and not say much, but when I paid for something I'd pull out enough silver to fill a bait can. Then they'd all look surprised. I'd give the Hermit a thousand dollars to explain everything about the sky and when I wanted new fishing tackle I'd send an order to Chicago that would make the postmaster drop dead."

“Say, I wish I was rich too,” exclaimed Paul, seeing the vision.

“I have a scheme that’ll make us both rich,” declared Ben, who stood still in the path and glowed with faith, his faded overalls, torn shirt and flappy hat, a hat even appearing scalloped, formed the base husk of a soul white with ambition.

“No,” said Paul. “You thought of it, and it’s no fair for me to be rich too. You might let me have enough for clothes and one or two, say ten, automobiles. But you thought it all out and I wouldn’t take very much. You keep it, Ben.”

“What would I do with all of it?” asked Ben. “There’ll be ten times as much as I could use. I’ll do this, Paul. I’ll take my two million first and then you take the next two and then I’ll take another two and so on. You can be watching me to see how I spend my money and it’ll be easier that way.

“We can be thinking up ways of spending the money,” continued Ben. “We couldn’t think

now of all the things we'd do with it, but we can later. You be thinking and I'll be thinking. We might ask the Hermit."

"We'd want to keep some," suggested Paul. "Mother and Father talk about saving money for a rainy day. Father says he wishes he had begun to save sooner."

"I know a place where we could hide a lot of money," said Ben. "When we take in a hundred dollars we'll keep half of it and I know where's a place to hide it."

"Where?" asked Paul.

"In a hollow tree," said Ben. "We'd have it in silver dollars, so the squirrels couldn't chew it up, and hide it in a hollow tree. There's one way back in the woods where nobody ever goes."

"Would the money we got be paper or silver?" asked Paul.

"Silver dollars," said Ben. "It would come that way. Then we could have the money changed into bills, except what we hid in the hollow tree. But it would nearly all be silver

dollars at first, for everybody would pay a dollar a box."

"Box of what?" inquired Paul.

"Ointment," replied Ben. "Balm of Gilead ointment. That's the way we would make the money. You heard what Bill Olson said about these trees. The woods are full of balm of Gilead trees and every tree has a fortune in it. You thought they were maples and I have lived here all my life and thought they were a yellowish popple. Nobody ever told me they were genuine balm of Gilead trees. Bill Olson was excited when he found 'em, and he's lived around here all of his life, and then he got the name wrong. We're the only two that know the trees are here and know the right name for them and know how much they're worth. I've heard something about balm of Gilead. I think it cures blind people. Paul, all we've got to do is to keep our mouths shut and make up some ointment and take in the money."

"Mother wants to know where I am all the time," lamented Paul.

“We’ll sell through agents,” said Ben, “like nursery agents, that come around with pictures of apples and plums as big as potatoes. Of course we can’t be out on the road all the time, but we can carry on the business.”

“We could have agents and give them orders what to do,” said Paul. “I have heard Father tell about agents and salesmen and district managers and the home office and the factory.”

“That’s it,” said Ben. “You know about business and I can collect the cans.”

“I’d have agents going out in Fords,” said Paul. “I could meet the district manager once a day and he could tell the others and then all the agents could start out and sell the farmers.”

“You do that,” said Ben, “and I’ll get the cans and fill them.”

“There are quite a few cans behind our cottage,” said Paul.

“I can row the boat across the lake and pick up lots of cans around some camping places

over there," said Ben. "Then Bill Olson uses snuff and he throws away snuff boxes by the hundred. You can track him by snuff boxes. But I suppose the boxes and cans ought to be all the same size."

"That isn't necessary," said Paul. "We can put up a half dozen in one kind of can and then another half dozen in a different kind of can. The agents can show just one kind of can or charge two dollars for the biggest ones."

"My," said Ben, "you know business."

"Father says it's just as necessary to sell goods as it is to put them up," said Paul. "I'll meet the agents or the district manager up beyond the cottage every evening and give him instructions, and you have the ointment hidden somewhere so it can be delivered."

"My idea," said Ben, "would be to row it across the lake and leave it on the island at the mouth of Gull River. The agents can wade to the island and carry the crates back to where their Fords are. The next morning they can get off bright and early to sell it. The money

can be left in the same place, in sacks. I'd row over with a load of ointment and row back with the money."

"The agents would want a commission," observed Paul.

"What's that?" asked Ben.

"They'd want a per cent," explained Paul. "We'd have to divide up with them. They can't work for nothing. We'll let each agent furnish his own car and pay his own expenses and give him half of the receipts."

"That's too much," thought Ben.

"If we see that they are making too much money we can cut down the per cent or say that times are hard," responded Paul.

The next thing to do was to gather the buds for making the ointment. The boys hid them in a stump which had been burned to the ground on one side. The unburned portion constituted the back of a rude bin and branches and leaves concealed the store of buds which the boys gathered.

"What makes your hands smell so?" asked

Paul's mother after one of his bud-gathering trips.

"They smell like a drugstore," added Dorothy.

Paul felt guilty and was afraid the secret would be out.

"Oh, there are all kinds of smells in the woods," he said lamely.

"You boys are up to something," ventured Dorothy, who had passed a few words with Ben as he had lingered afar off but within talking distance of the cottage.

"If it's anything you will hear more about it," replied Paul, feeling more important than he cared to reveal.

The boys had collected as many as a bushel of buds, working with zeal. Then they thought it was time to do the mixing.

"What'll we mix them with?" asked Paul.

"Let's see," said Ben. "There's butter and bacon fat and soap and honey. Maybe other things. What do you think would be best?"

Paul said that in the song he heard in church

honey was mentioned as well as balm of Gilead. He thought milk and honey and balm of Gilead were all mentioned in the same song or in the Bible anyhow.

“I’d get some milk,” said Ben, “but our cows would kick the daylights out of me, and Uncle Erickson would catch me at it.”

“Get some butter,” suggested Paul.

“Aw, we separate the milk and the cream all goes to town,” explained Ben.

“Then we can use the cream,” argued Paul.

“It ought to mix pretty thick,” thought Ben.

“We can boil it down,” said Paul.

Under a friendly willow, which grew where the water had stood earlier in the season, a motley collection of cans awaited. Some were rusty inside even if gorgeously ornamented outside by illustrations of salmon leaping falls in rivers or of eagles or Indians. Red-cheeked tomatoes—pictures of them—adorned many of the cans, and peas in lovely green and opened pods were well represented. The tin covers often hung as by a thread, jagged and threat-

ening blood poison to hapless fingers. Some of the cans had held coffee and were inoffensive.

“That would work all right,” said Ben, “if nobody saw the smoke. But if we start a fire in the woods there will be more than twenty people here to put it out. Bill Olson would be here in no time. They are awfully afraid of forest fires around here.”

“Then we could try honey,” said Paul.

“That’s the best stuff,” replied Ben, greatly relieved. “We can hunt up a bee tree and get the honey. Balm of Gilead mixed with honey would sell like hot cakes.”

“We could put on a higher price,” said Paul.

“It would cure more diseases, wouldn’t it?” asked Ben.

Paul thought that the ointment would cure lots of things inside a person if honey were an ingredient. It could be counted on to cure sores and cuts and things like that anyhow, but put up with honey the medicine would be good for one’s insides. Probably it would cure hay fever.

“I know what hay fever is,” said Ben eagerly. “People come to the pine woods every year to keep from having hay fever. They sneeze and their eyes run.”

“If I had to die I would rather die of heart disease,” said Paul. “That takes a fellow off quick.”

Day after day the boys coursed the woods looking for a bee tree. They would first look for bees, but there were more yellow jackets and striped flies and wasps and hornets and other insects than real bees. And they had a time keeping track of bees that they did find. The bees flew fast and were soon out of sight. Several farmers had hives of bees, so there was no certainty that a bee when found did not belong to a hive. When the boys did feel sure they knew which way a bee had gone home and tried to find another bee which by crossing the line of flight of the first bee would give them the direction of the expected bee tree, the intersection of lines would as likely as not be in the lake or somewhere else where no bee

tree could possibly exist. When they did not make headway with bees they gathered more balm of Gilead buds. Ben said they would keep.

Ben would go over to the Parker cottage and get a drink and hang around until Paul could get away with him. Sometimes Ben would help Paul get up the wood, which was done hurriedly. The burs brought home in Paul's clothing told of long expeditions in search of the elusive bee tree.

One day they ran across the Hermit, who had a garden in a clearing. Ben swung the conversation around to medicines and asked the Hermit what the best medicine in the world was.

"For mind or body?" asked the Hermit.

"Why, when you're sick," said Ben.

Then the Hermit told about a lady of a long time ago, perhaps Shakespeare's wife, who stumped a doctor by asking him if he could minister to a mind diseased. The Hermit said a person might be sick in his mind or in his

body, but for a good many things he used witch hazel.

“Ever try balm of Gilead?” asked Ben.

“It has a magical name,” replied the Hermit, and he said some lines of poetry.

Ben looked knowingly at Paul and when the boys were going home told Paul that they were on the right track. It might take time to put the ointment on the market, but there was big money in it. He felt surer than ever about that. The Hermit had spoken as if there was a lot behind what he had said and he spoke of magic anyhow.

The boys gave up looking for a bee tree that day and took the path that led by the old stump where their store of balm of Gilead buds was concealed. As they approached they saw signs that did not look right and when they came nearer they were dismayed. Somebody or something had been there and the buds had been scattered about and the place was a sight.

“It’s Bill Olson’s work,” was Ben’s first

remark. "He's caught on and this is his way of showing it."

"Bill wouldn't do such a thing," thought Paul.

"No, I guess he wouldn't," assented Ben. "But who did? Somebody's been here and found out our secret and is trying to keep us from getting rich."

"Let's look for tracks," said Paul.

So the boys went around the stump and crashed through the bushes in their eagerness to find who had been there. Suddenly something jumped up and started down the path with a "woof."

"It's the Hermit's pigs," ejaculated Ben disgustedly. "'They've rooted these buds six ways for Sunday."

"Never mind, Paul," said Ben, "come down tomorrow and we'll go fishing for picks and pikes."

So the boys agreed to catch picks and pikes.

IV

PICKS AND PIKES

OLD Man Westby had stated with emphasis that a man could go out after supper and in two hours' time catch as many fish by still-fishing as by trolling all day in the hot sun. But then Old Man Westby rarely went fishing himself. He had lived under Squaw Point for forty years and might have caught enough fish to fill a box car. If he used to fish much he did not any more, but he could tell more about fishing than others who went out regularly. Perhaps he caught fish in the winter through the ice. He said he did. He once speared a twenty-eight pound pickerel, so he said. A man was out with Old Man Westby and they were watching for fish. They had speared quite a few, ordinary size, and had thrown them out on the ice to freeze. The men were

looking into the water when something came along. Was it a fish? By glory, it was a monster. They could see just the head and some of the body. It darkened the whole space below the hole in the ice. The other man rammed down his spear and hit the creature right back of the head, hit him hard too. The fish gave a flirt with its head and went on, breaking off the spear handle where it joined the spear. But the biggest fish Old Man Westby got weighed twenty-eight pounds. You can spear enough fish in one day in winter to last till spring, said Old Man Westby, which may be the reason he frowns upon going fishing himself with hook and line. His boys go fishing and keep the table supplied with fish.

“How do you catch fish through the ice?” Paul inquired.

“Oh, have a fish house,” said Westby. “This is about four by six feet. It is lined with tar paper or building paper to keep the cold out and to keep it dark too. It has to be dark inside so you can see into the water. You have

a little stove to keep you warm and you sit there on a chair and watch through a hole in the ice for the fish to come along. There is a decoy minnow that you hold still in the water or you can make it run in a circle by pulling the string, the tail being set crooked. There you sit, perfectly comfortable, and wait for the big fellows to poke their noses under the hole. Sometimes they barely move when they come up to the minnow and again, especially when the minnow is moving, the fish will dash at it and then you have to be quicker than greased lightning to spear your fish. You slide the fish house out over the ice to where there is seven or eight feet of water under you and chop a hole in the ice. I used to have a mark on a tree to go by and set my fish house just so."

The way to catch the biggest fish was often talked over by Ben and Paul, Ben doing most of the talking and Paul listening and asking all kinds of questions. There were still-fishing and trolling. Ben favored trolling. If one wished to still fish he could find the drop-off

opposite the Point and measure with his pole and find twenty feet of water. Just at the edge of the drop-off was a good place to throw in. The fish feed along the edge of the drop-off. As they come along down the lake and strike the edge of the drop-off they don't go up toward the surface but just keep feeling their way along the edge. So they pile up and you can always catch something still-fishing. But the old whoppers are just as likely to be found somewhere else. They like to be alone and you may get the biggest fish of the season when you are trolling near weeds or about a quarter of a mile out from Uncle Erickson's.

Ben caught more picks and pikes than any other kinds. Pikes make the best eating, though picks are just about as good. Pikes won't keep long. They go bad quicker than any other fish. A pike will strike hard and go to the bottom with your line. A pick will come to the boat with its mouth wide open, on the surface of the water, sometimes, shaking its head, and if he isn't hooked to a fare-you-well

he's likely to spit out the hook just when you see him in the frying-pan. Bass? It's fun to catch them, but they are bony, the rock bass, and they have a taste. Some people like them too.

"What bait shall we take?" inquired Paul excitedly.

"Frogs," replied Ben. "The fish are taking frogs now. Sometimes they take frogs and again they want minnows. Uncle uses pork, fat pork, and he pulls 'em in too. But you have to keep grass off your bait. A pick won't look at a bait that has weeds on it. Some use artificial bait and get fish."

"If we should catch more fish than we could eat what would we do with them?" asked Paul.

"Oh, give 'em away, but you can't give fish away sometimes. The hens eat ours, or the dog. You ought to see Mike get outside of fish. He'll eat fish from the beach that have been dead a week. Crunch 'em right down. He must have a stomach like an ostrich. The crows like dead fish. Leave fish on the beach

and pretty soon the crows are saying caw, caw, and pecking away till there is not a bit of meat left. One time an old crow was out here teaching three young ones to eat dead fish. You ought to have heard the noise. They wouldn't learn, I guess, and the old crow was talking to them. They made such a racket that Uncle got the shot gun and went out and killed the whole bunch with one barrel. Then they stopped."

As the boys talked Ben was getting the boat ready. It had to be bailed out first. Like many of Uncle Erickson's possessions it was not in the best of condition. It needed paint, real white lead paint, to close up some ugly looking seams and restore the water-soaked blackish wood to something like its original resistance to water. The oars had been worn to a blunt point by contact with sand and the anchor was a casting from a worn-out harvester, weighing all that a boy could lift and ill-suited for holding a boat, except by sheer weight. There were traces of red paint on the casting and it

sprawled like a turtle run over by a road machine. The anchor "rope" was a chain, several lengths of dog chain snapped together.

"Is the boat safe?" asked Paul.

"Always has been," said Ben. "She's getting old, but I guess it wouldn't sink. It's a flat-bottomed one and wouldn't tip over easy."

Paul said he would not want to go out if the boat was not safe. Ben said he was not in favor of taking chances. The lake could be pretty ugly. But he was used to it.

Ben had a faded line, which he thought would hold. His plan was to draw in and when he got the fish near the boat to give the line a rather heavy pull while the fish was still under water. This would give such a boost to the fish that it would keep on coming after it left the water and the strain on the line would be so much less. Ben tied the end of the line to his leg and fished while rowing. When he got a bite he would row with one hand, alternating, and pull in. If there was a fish on he would drop both oars. Paul fished out of the stern,

sitting gingerly erect, for there was no back support to the stern seat. Paul used a feathered hook with a spinner of metal, not being quite prepared to handle the frogs.

Paul caught the first one. It was beginner's luck, said Ben. The pick, big enough for a meal at the cottage, jumped about in the bottom of the boat and freed itself from the hook, finally bringing up against the rower's seat. Ben picked it up and dropped it into the closed stern box, the top of which formed a seat, Paul rising and bending forward while Ben opened the box. Paul was joyful and was thinking of what they would say at the cottage when he walked in with a fish thirty inches long. Aunt Dorothy would laugh and say things and his mother would praise him. He was running out his line, when he suddenly jumped off the seat and looked astonished.

"That's nothing," said Ben, "just the old pick thrashing around."

Paul felt ashamed for having been startled, but he was not expecting such a thump under

the seat. The next time the fish jumped Paul hitched only a little and after that he kept from appearing to notice the commotion in the stern.

The boys had been so interested in fishing that they had not taken note of the looks of the lake. Paul had confidence in the boating skill of Ben, and Paul's mother had felt safe, for Ben was a good swimmer. Ben had indeed advertised his ability by performing stunts, jumping and diving from Uncle Erickson's boat when the Parker family were upon the lake. Paul saw that clouds were forming and that the water did not look the same as before. Suddenly a gust of wind struck them.

"Guess we better get out of this," remarked Ben, who began to pull in his line after taking a look over his shoulder to the west.

For the last half hour the boys had been still-fishing and the anchor was down. Ben told Paul to pull in the anchor. Ben would keep the boat head on to the wind, which was now beginning to roll up the waves, first wrinkling the

water by sudden force and then heaving it into waves which broke in white caps.

“Pull her in,” shouted Ben. “When we get that anchor in we’ll go home and come again some other day.”

Paul needed no urging to haul in the dog chain. They were now a half mile out and the boat was beginning to rock deeply. Paul knelt at the side of the old tub and struggled to get the anchor aboard without leaning much over the side. The anchor seemed to weigh a ton. When under water it did not seem to lose much of its weight and it was a heavy pull for Paul to get the casting above the water. Then he had to struggle to get it as high as the side of the boat. He poised it for a moment on the side and without in the least foreseeing what might happen let it fall within. Uncle Erickson would never have let the anchor fall into the boat like that, for he handled the old boat as if it were eggs, rotten eggs at that. Nor would Ben have been so foolish as to let the anchor plunge from the top of one side of the boat

to the bottom. But Paul was inexperienced with materials. He never knew just how much a thing would stand. And his eagerness was all to get the anchor aboard. Ben saw that the anchor was where it might fall and do damage and said look out. Paul thought Ben meant that Paul should look out and not drop the anchor on his foot. So Paul let go of the anchor and it fell into the bottom of the boat, where it struck one of the partly decayed floor pieces, dealing it a blow that sprung the strip as well as broke it. Water spurted through the break.

“Jerusalem,” shouted Ben. “But bail.”

Paul was white with terror.

“Empty the frogs and bail,” called Ben.

The frogs were in a three-pound coffee pail with holes punched through the cover to give them air.

“Let ’em go,” added Ben. “We can get more.”

Paul managed to pull off the cover and let the frogs out. Some hopped about in the boat

and others jumped overboard. Paul bailed desperately. In his trembling and tearful haste he caught the coffee pail under a splinter and ripped it off. More water rushed in. The waves were rolling higher and there were flashes of lightning. Big drops of rain fell. Ben was pulling at the oars, endeavoring to keep the boat from taking water over the sides. Paul bailed and bailed in desperation. The water spread over the flat bottom and Paul could not get a full pail of it. When Ben had bailed out preparatory to going out on the lake he had stood on one edge of the boat, thus tipping the boat up and allowing the water to flow to one side where it could be bailed out in pailfuls. But now it was not possible to bail in such an artful manner and the water gained on Paul, who was squatting and bailing with water nearly to his shoe tops.

“I can’t keep ahead of the water,” moaned Paul.

Ben did not answer. He was looking one way and another across the lake and putting all his

strength into the oars. He was not pulling straight for shore, but seemed to be trying to get to some one place in the lake.

“Oh, Ben,” called out Paul. “Go to shore quick.”

But Ben kept rowing and looking. The boat was nearly half full of water by this time and whenever it turned its side to the waves more water came in. Paul was wet through by the rain and from bailing and keeping down in the boat. His hat had been carried away by one of the first gusts of wind.

“We’re going to die,” sobbed Paul.

“She won’t sink,” said Ben, looking over his shoulder to see where he was going and glancing to points on opposite shores. “She won’t sink and if she tries to she has another guess coming.”

“Do you think I’ll go to hell?” asked Paul. “I told a lie once.”

“Not this way,” replied Ben confidently. “Too much water.”

Ben was headed for the middle of the lake

and was coaxing the old boat along as well as he could. Pretty soon Ben appeared very certain about something and he told Paul to stop bailing and to shorten the anchor chain by snapping it up short. Paul was told to make the chain about ten feet long.

While the boys were going farther out into the lake people on shore saw the plight the boys were in. Paul's mother was on the beach and others came running. Uncle Erickson deplored the fact that there wasn't another boat within a mile. The Hermit had a boat but he had gone out that morning and had not come back. Probably the Hermit had drawn his boat up on the beach somewhere and was in the woods hunting up specimens or something.

"If them boys will sit in the boat or hang onto it if she goes under, they'll be all right," remarked Uncle Erickson, hitching his vest into position by taking hold of the pointed extremities in front with both hands.

"My poor Paul," sobbed Mrs. Parker.
"He's such a good boy."

“I tell ye they’re all right if the boat don’t turn over on them,” said Uncle Erickson comfortingly. “Let ’em stay right in the boat and she’ll carry a lot of water and the boys too. That’s why I like a wooden boat. They won’t sink, not generally. Over at Morton’s summer resort they’ve got a lot of metal boats with air chambers. Suppose a hole gets into an air chamber. Then the boat would sink like a grindstone if anything happened to it.”

“Do something, do something,” pleaded Mrs. Parker.

“They’re all right yet,” replied Uncle Erickson, “them boys. As long as they are all right they are all right. I can see their heads above water yet. I wish the Hermit hadn’t gone out with his boat, then we could take it and row over and pick up the boys. Is that your boy, Mrs. Parker? I’ve seen the day I could peel off my clothes and swim to where the boys are, but not since I had inflammatory rheumatism. That’s positively the worst disease that ever I had. Was laid up for three months. There’s

a difference too between swimming in smooth water and bucking waves. Lake water don't taste any too good when it goes down your throttle and the waves are four feet high and the water churns into both ears every stroke you take. Can your boy swim?"

"Oh, there's a boat coming from the other side," exclaimed Mrs. Parker. "The boys may be saved yet."

"No one in it," responded Uncle Erickson, after looking through his hands at the object. "That's one of the boats from Morton's summer resort that has been driven out by the wind. We pick up one or two of Morton's boats on this side after every big storm when the wind's in the west."

"Mightn't it drift to where the boys are?" asked Mrs. Parker, still hoping against hope.

"Not one chance in a million, and then they don't usually leave the oars in. They are not sinking so very fast," added Uncle Erickson. "If they don't mind having a bath they may get in yet. She's about level full of water and

the boys will have to sit tight or get knocked over into the lake. But if they stay steady the old boat will stay by them. There was a half-breed Indian that had a canoe that would tip over if he shifted his chew of tobacco from one side of his mouth to——”

“My poor Paul,” wept Mrs. Parker. “He is only a baby.”

When Paul had shortened the anchor chain, Ben told him to get ready to drop the anchor overboard when told to do so. Ben told Paul to do as he said and do it quick. Paul got the anchor ready to drop from the boat side and Ben kept rowing and looking for the right place.

Suddenly Ben yelled, “Let her go Gallagher!”

Paul dropped the casting off the side. It sank only a short distance, as could be seen from the slack chain. Ben dropped the oars and pulled in on the chain and brought the boat back until he bent over the anchor.

“Just what I expected,” he said, holding to

the chain with one hand, and beginning to sing in a squawky voice about a home on the rolling deep. "Two feet of water."

"Aren't we going to drown?" asked Paul.

"Naw, here's the island," said Ben. "Here's the island that's in the middle of the lake. I thought I could hit it all right. You sight across from the Point to the spruce trees one way and then you sight from Morton's boat-house to the lone pine the other way and where the lines cross is the island. Water's only two feet deep here now; never's more than three feet. But it's deeper than Sam Hill off the edge of it."

"How big is the island?" asked Paul.

"Half acre," said Ben, "and we're right in the middle of it. See that bunch of reeds. That's in the middle. I've been over here in good weather and seen bottom."

"Then we won't sink?" inquired Paul.

"Not if we stay where we are or somewhere else around here. I wouldn't want to get out of the boat and walk in my sleep out here. But

we're safe enough. The anchor will hold the boat and if it didn't I'd get right out of the boat and stand here with the water up to my stomach and wait for the cows to come home."

"I'd do what you did," said Paul.

The worst of the storm had passed, though the waves were still rolling viciously. The trees on the shore were dripping and let down showers of water if branches were touched. A group stood on the beach straining their eyes toward the boys, who had not sunk yet. There was a sound of wheels in the water of the ruts of the sandy road that ran along the beach and Bill Olson came into view, in a wretched old buggy that looked dry notwithstanding having been in the downpour. Bill was driving one of his plow team, a horse that from the rear looked as square as a box car and moved about as fast as a box car shunted upon a siding, just before it stops moving altogether.

"They're anchored on the island," he said.

"I thought of that when I first came out," commented Uncle Erickson. "I thought my

boy was safe out there. Mrs. Parker here—her boy's out in the boat—felt a little worried, but I knew the boys would fetch up on the island where the water's shallow. That's exactly what they've done. I didn't say anything about the island, but I knew it was there."

"Then the boys are safe," gasped Mrs. Parker, relieved so much that she was faint.

"Sure," said Bill Olson.

"How can we get to them?" asked Mrs. Parker.

"They can bail out and row back," said Uncle Erickson.

"Better send a boat over there," said Bill Olson. "Maybe they've broken an oar. I'm going to buy a motor boat next year, next year when I put up my cottage right here where the rest of you live, and if I had that boat now I'd chug over there and bring the boys back."

But the Hermit, who had watched the storm from the other side of the lake, happened to be rowing in, and the boys signaled to him. He had a beautiful boat and he drove it through

the water as if he wanted to lick the lake. The worse the waves were the better the Hermit seemed to like going out. He came up to where the boys were squatting in the old water-logged boat and threw over a rope not much larger than a clothesline. Ben tied this to the bow of Uncle Erickson's boat and explained how it all happened. The Hermit laughed and took the boys into his boat and pulled back to Uncle Erickson's landing, which consisted of beach in a state of nature except where tin cans and junk littered the sand. Uncle Erickson had never built a regular boat landing, as he said the ice would knock one to pieces if he should build one.

"Don't forget the big pick," said Ben as Paul was going ashore, and Paul went back to the stern of Uncle Erickson's boat for the big pick, which was still much alive, having had, in fact, plenty of water to swim in most of the time.

V

DYNAMITE AND GUNPOWDER

THE Hermit had been clearing off a piece of land and had used dynamite to blow up the stumps. Most of the Hermit's land was wooded and he had to clear away the trees, stumps and underbrush for what little plow land he seemed to need. He kept no horse or cow, just the two reddish pigs, Pope and Dryden, and a dog. His garden was a fine one and he had good things to eat. He went to town in his automobile, which he kept in a place in the woods under a khaki.

The Hermit knew just how to use dynamite. He would put in a charge and hide behind a tree and in just so long a time, zip, it would go off and the stump would be blown out and left on top of the ground. He knew how to put a chain around a stump so the dynamite

would blow out the whole stump and not blow the chain away. Old Man Westby used to go and see the blown-out stumps after the dynamiting was over, but he usually kept away for several days for fear there might be dynamite left in the ground ready to go off. When he had stumped, years ago, people did not use dynamite and he was afraid of it.

One day the Hermit was in town with his car and ran across Westby on the street. Westby showed a desire to ride home with the Hermit instead of going back by team, driven by one of the Westby boys, for the wagon was loaded with Westbys and supplies. The Hermit was pleased to have Westby go in the car, and Westby climbed in, taking a seat beside the Hermit. There was a package in the rear compartment of the car in which Westby showed a furtive interest. The car was going along at good speed, when Westby could conceal his curiosity no longer, for he had his suspicions.

“What is there in that package?” he finally

asked bluntly as the car swerved and jolted over pits in the sand road.

"Dynamite," was the Hermit's reply.

"You don't mean it," gasped Westby.

"For blowing out stumps," said the Hermit.

Westby partly rose up from the seat and sat by holding on stiffly with his arms.

"It might go off," said Westby.

The Hermit looked ahead and ran the car, as was his wont, with a sort of fight showing in the way he took the road.

"What would happen to us if she blew up?" continued Westby.

"No danger. I packed it in," said the Hermit.

"We'd go to kingdom come and then some," said Westby, helping to answer his own question.

The car jolted suddenly.

"I'm in no hurry," protested Westby. "I'll be home long before the boys are as it is. I'd just as soon go slower."

The Hermit did not slacken speed.

"I like the road along the lake," added Westby, "like to look at everything as I go by. You can't see the crops if you go too fast. You learn a good deal by going to town if you take time to look at things by the road."

The Hermit nodded. Maybe he was thinking about stars or comets or how fast comets go through space.

"There's a bargain for somebody in the old McCluskey place," remarked Westby, still poised above the seat and resting upon his arms. "Slow down when you come along there and cast your eye on the grain."

"We'll come back some day and look over the farm," replied the Hermit in his soft voice, but not seeming to be thinking about what he was saying.

"Ten to one we never get back here," argued Westby in dismay.

No answer.

They came to a stretch of newly made road. They were in for jolts there for certain.

Westby could see the end of all, in his mind. He did not propose to die yet if he could help it. His father had lived to be ninety-one, and his grandfather died at eighty. Westby was only seventy-two.

“Sort of pick your way across this new road,” he pleaded with the Hermit. “Take it easy, you might bust a tire.”

The Hermit did not seem to hear. The car was approaching the new road at what seemed to Westby to be frightful speed. The Hermit did not seem to know the danger he was running into. Probably he was absent-minded. Westby regretted that he had not stayed with the boys and come in the wagon. Never again would he ride in a car without knowing beforehand what was in it. He could not understand the Hermit. Sometimes the Hermit seemed as gentle as a lamb and then again he would show a streak of nerve that would make you sit up and take notice. There was a lot of fight in the Hermit's nature, somewhere down in his system. The way he jerked that car along showed

that. They were coming close to where the new road began.

“Stop,” shouted Westby. “Stop, for God’s sake.”

The Hermit shut off the gasoline and threw out the clutch, bringing the car to a stop.

“What’s the matter?” asked the Hermit.

“My legs are cramped,” said Westby. “I want to walk across this patch of new road. I’ll go behind the car.”

The Hermit ran the car across the new road and stopped, waiting for Westby, who was far behind. Westby said he would just as soon walk clear home; it was only three miles farther. But the Hermit would not hear to Westby’s suggestion. The Hermit drove more slowly the rest of the way and Westby was delivered safe and sound by the side of the log tool house.

“Much obliged,” said Westby, “for the ride.”

Westby did not see the Hermit again until the evening of the next day, when he strolled

over to the Hermit's. Ben and Paul were at the Hermit's when Westby arrived.

"I'm feeling fine," remarked Westby, though no one had inquired how he felt.

"You don't feel any the worse for your ride home in the car?" inquired the Hermit.

"Not a bit, not a bit," said Westby heartily. "But let me tell you something. I was scared to death. You didn't know it, but I was. I calculated that we'd be blown to kingdom come. Did you know why I got out and walked when we came to the new road? I was afraid we'd be blown up. I never took a long breath from the time I knew there was dinnymite in the car until I got out for good."

"Then your legs weren't cramped when you got out before we came to the new road?" inquired the Hermit softly.

"Yes and no," said Westby. "I never sat down once on that there seat after you said dinnymite and my legs were a little stiff, but I had reasons for not wanting to go like blazes across the new road."

"I wouldn't have run you into any danger," said the Hermit. "I know dynamite."

"I'm not afraid of gunpowder," asserted Westby. "I understand that perfectly, but new stuff like dinnymite, that's for others. I have shot a gun too many years not to be acquainted with gunpowder. Ducks, deer, wild geese, gray squirrels, jack rabbits, bear and coyotes—I've shot 'em all."

"I suppose you could tell some good stories about shooting," remarked Paul shyly.

"He lives in town," Ben explained, unnecessarily, for the benefit of Old Man Westby.

"Tell some stories about shooting?" ejaculated Westby. "They wouldn't be stories at all—they'd be facts, cold facts. I used to go to turkey shoots until they refused to let me shoot any more. They would put a turkey in a crate and let its head stick out and the man that killed the turkey by shooting it in the head got the bird. We paid ten cents a shot. This would be just before Thanksgiving. One time it was me and Indian Charlie who had the first

shots. He stepped up and fired. Mister turkey didn't even look surprised. Then I shot and I had one to take home. Then another turkey was put up. About a dozen men shot before it was my turn. Indian Charlie was one of them. The turkey was so far away that it was like shooting at a fly speck across the lake. I took plenty of time to sight—they never could rattle me—and, bing! and I had two turkeys. Then some of the others managed to murder a few turkeys, but I got another, making three in all. Charlie got one for his old squaw. Just one. He always seemed to be trying to persuade himself that he was the better shot. Didn't like me a little bit. He thought that I had traded a canoe that somebody had stolen from him and he was always suspicious and looking across his nose at me. I figured that Charlie thought that if he could shoot better than I could he would take a shot at me some time, but if he knew I could go him one better he wouldn't dare try it. If he would miss me he would know what to expect. I'd come across

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him in the woods and say 'Hello, Charlie,' but it was hard work for him even to grunt. I never exposed my back to him and in those days I had my gun handy.

"Somebody in town thought to get up a match between Indian Charlie and me. It was somebody who was working Charlie for something and wanted him to beat me to make him feel good. We were to have ten shots apiece. My gun was laid up for repairs and I was a teetotal fool to go into the shoot. They found a gun for me. Charlie had his own. Charlie shot first and made three hits out of five. I missed every shot. Then I began to get mad.

" 'You've changed the sights on this gun,' I said and I was pretty hot.

" 'Mebbe eye's crooked,' said Charlie and I could have sent him back to the reservation in a sack. It's bad enough to be insulted by a white man. 'Take another gun,' they said. 'I will,' said I, 'and I'll pick it out myself.' Fred Billings was in the crowd and I asked him for his

gun and I asked him to go and get it himself. I knew Fred. Indian Charlie shot the next five shots and never hit the mark once. I took Fred's gun and fired. The ball went about an inch too high, but she held true. So I took a pinch less of the muzzle sight in my eye and put four balls on the bulls-eye. That put me over Indian Charlie, but there had been some rotten shooting. I was ashamed to beat so poor a shot.

“Then I told the crowd that I would show them how a white man could shoot and I looked Charlie square in the eye. I took Fred's rifle—she was a bird, as good as mine any day—and piled ten bullets on top of one another within the circle. Then that crowd shut up. But Charlie didn't look any too sweet.”

“Did he ever try to get even with you after that?” asked Paul.

“Yes,” said Westby, “and it was too funny. He kept shooting and shooting and finally got word to me that he had a gun that would do what I did in town when I made ten hits hand

running. I examined the bullet marks and found that the bullet holes did not match the caliber of Charlie's gun, and also I found the punch they used to make the holes with in the target, so I asked to be excused from being impressed with Charlie's skill. But some of the bucks could shoot as well, but no better, than a white man. There are some Indians and some white men that couldn't shoot straight in a thousand years. They're not built for it some way and they may be just the ones that are always talking about shooting and trying to convince themselves that they are good shots."

"You must have had lots of fun, being able to shoot so straight," ventured Paul.

"I've had fun in my day with the shooting gallery people," said Westby with great satisfaction. "I certainly have had fun with them. I used to go in, looking like an old hayseed, and take a rifle and shoot just once. That was to find how much wrong the sights were. I never saw a shooting gallery rifle that didn't

have its sights doctored. After a while I would get a gun that shot as it did when it came from the factory and then I would take everything there was. When they got acquainted with me the gallery men would shut up shop when they saw me coming or have urgent business somewhere else till I went out.

“My gun was a thirty-five caliber and looked small. One time the White boys had a fierce Jersey bull they were going to slaughter. They asked me if I would shoot him. I said yes. So I went up with the thirty-five. They took a look at the gun and asked me if I expected to kill the bull with that thing. I said I did. They tied the bull up between two trees about eight feet apart. They put a chain around his horns and ran it around one tree and then ran it around the other tree and brought it back to his horns. That was so that if I missed him he couldn't charge and kill me. I stood off about as far as from here to that tree you see and let drive. The bull started for me, blood in his eye. I let him have

another and he stopped. The first bullet had gone clear through his head and they found it between his forelegs when they cut him up. But the second bullet stopped him."

"What if the second ball had missed?" asked Paul.

"I would have made a sieve of him," said Westby. "But the first bullet killed him. He was dead but didn't know it. The second bullet got there pretty soon after the first. I could shoot so the bullets would be only half an inch apart when they left the muzzle."

Ben had been listening, but he had heard nearly all of Old Man Westby's accounts before. However, he had never heard what became of Indian Charlie. So he asked about what became of the Indian who was such a poor shot.

"Didn't I ever tell you the last I saw of Indian Charlie?" asked Westby.

"I should think he might have been up to something," added Ben.

"I didn't fear him," said Westby. "I knew

that if he ever took a shot at me he would miss the first time and then I could salt him. I was in practice then. I've shot many a loon and the man that hits a loon with a rifle ball is not a bad shot."

"What makes them so hard to hit?" asked Paul.

"They say they can dodge a bullet," said Westby. "It amounts to that. Maybe they know when you're going to fire and dive a quarter of a second before you pull the trigger. Anyhow they get under water pretty spry and then come up rods away just as if smiling at you. When they are out in the lake there isn't so very much to shoot at either. There's a lot of space surrounding a loon's head when he's several hundred yards away, and you can hit that ten times easier than you can perforate mister loon's dome of thought. But I used to shoot them, but not often; they are no good for eating. It was just a waste of ammunition.

"But the ducks I used to get. I used to shoot

ducks around Squaw Point until I quacked in my sleep. I would clean them and freeze them and we would have ducks all winter. Once in a while there would come a warm spell and they would thaw a little and go bad. But ducks, ducks, ducks. Oh, there'd be acres of ducks out in the middle of the lake."

"Where did they all come from?" asked Paul.

"Up north," said Westby. "They breed away up north, in Canada most likely, and come down over the Minnesota lakes. This lake used to sound like a battlefield, from early morning till late at night. Bang, bang, bang, and smoke in the air. We used to buy ammunition by the crate. Parties used to come down and stay with me when I bached it. I had a house at the Narrows then. One time there was a lawyer in the party, a big man. When we got ready to go to bed he asked me if there was a cellar under the house. I said there was, a small one, right under the middle of the house. He said he wanted to sleep on the cel-

lar door. He said he was the worst man to snore and he wanted the cellar door for a sounding board. By glory, he could snore. Instead of saying he wanted to go to bed he was in the habit of saying he wanted to snore."

"What kind of ducks did you shoot?" asked Paul.

"Every kind you can imagine," replied Westby. "Pin tails, mallards, canvasbacks. Some of them would weigh seven or eight pounds apiece. There are lots of ducks yet. Last winter we had ducks galore. I shot them late in the fall and froze them. You have seen the wild grapevine this side of the bridge. I crawled under that and got nine at one shot. I went to get the boat to bring them in and found only seven. Two had got away; they had merely been stunned.

"Oh, I was going to tell you about Indian Charlie. One fall, this was years ago, I was working in my corn. It was deer hunting season and there were hunters around. All at

once, bing, and a bullet went pretty close to my hat. I took it for a stray shot and thought no more about it. Pretty soon there was another and that one put a little ventilation in my hat. I knew that while there might be one shot coming my way by accident there could not have been two, so I set out to investigate. I thought I would do a little deer hunting myself. I knew which way the balls had come from and I could tell the caliber from the way they talked. They were forty-fives and that was Indian Charlie's gun. I swung around so I would cut the trail that he would be likely to take in getting away from Squaw Point and sat down to wait. It was late in the afternoon when I saw Indian Charlie. He had set his gun up against a tree and was about a rod away from it."

"Did you pepper him?" asked Ben excitedly.

"No," said Westby. "What would have been the use? He wasn't likely to kill me by shooting at me—he was too poor a shot—and a man has to take his chances with accidents. I didn't think it was necessary to shoot him,

but I did fix his gun. It was leaning up so it was a good mark. I shot the stock to pieces. I emptied my magazine, six shots, into it as fast as I could pump. Indian Charlie must have caught on, for he didn't try to rescue his gun and he knew mighty well who was doing the firing. I'll bet the air was full of splinters. After I had wasted enough ammunition in shooting his gunstock into kindling wood I went home. That was my last experience with Indian Charlie, except that I have helped support him, if he's still living. He got too much fire water in his system a few months later and killed another brave, and he's leading a quiet life in the state prison now, if he's not gone to the happy hunting ground. There may be good Indians that are not dead, but not Charlie."

The Hermit asked to be excused for changing the subject, but had Westby ever known pigs to eat balm of Gilead buds. He said the pigs had smelled of balm of Gilead.

"You are mighty fortunate if that is their

odor," said Westby, striking his hands upon his knees at the joke.

The boys looked at each other but said nothing.

“No,” said Westby, “I never knew pigs to take to begilyan, but maybe they do. They might waller around in the brush if there was some handy.”

The boys began to feel easier, since Westby was looking at his watch and was placing his cane in an upright position and acting as if he meant to rise.

“What is the best way to learn to shoot?” asked Paul, to turn the conversation away from the pigs and their suggestion of balm of Gilead.

“Get a gun,” said Westby, “that is the first step, and then shoot.”

“Buffalo Bill was a great shot,” remarked Ben.

“One of the greatest,” said Westby. “A man who knows how to shoot is always willing to say a good word for somebody else who can

shoot. Buffalo Bill was a good man with a gun."

"He must have shot up a lot of ammunition, learning," suggested Ben.

"Boy, he shot up tons and tons of it," assured Westby.

"Probably thousands of dollars' worth," ventured Ben.

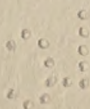
"Without any question," answered Westby. "He did not have to figure on the cost of ammunition."

The Hermit had sat looking at the stars and watching the clouds that swam across the face of the moon.

"I must be going," said Westby, and he rose stiffly.

The boys thought they would go along too. All three were going around the first turn in the path when Westby's cane came down on something. There was a "woof" and a pig jumped up and ran.

"It's one of those pesky pigs," remarked Westby, "one of those begilyan pigs. Probably



them pigs like perfumery and put a little on their bristles now and then.”

Ben pushed Paul in the ribs and the two boys kept still till they passed Westby's house and then they laughed.

VI

THROUGH THE WOODS

BEN and Paul never tired of wandering about in the woods. They liked to find different kinds of trees. There was the black ash tree, with its beautiful fretwork bark and compound leaves consisting of four single leaves on each side and one on the end. They found the balsam tree, and studied how it differed from the spruce. Uncle Erickson said that balsam lumber was "shaky" and not so good as pine or spruce. But the balsam tree was beautiful and had a reputation for fragrance and healing power. Spruce trees were numerous, the upland and the lowland spruce. The boys asked Uncle Erickson what the difference was and he said the upland spruce would not grow in low places and the lowland spruce would; they looked alike, he said. Among the evergreens

were the pines. The boys liked the white pine, for it scented the air, especially on hot days, and the boughs whispered so softly when the wind blew. Uncle Erickson said the white pine made the best lumber, for it "worked up well." The white pine is the long leaf pine, with five leaves in a bunch and many bunches growing together on the end of a twig. The white pine grows in a sandy soil, and there were many of these on the sandy flats and at the foot of the lake. There were Norway pines too, with two leaves in a bundle, leaves longer and stiffer than those of the white pine. The bark of the Norway is reddish, and the tree can thus be distinguished from the white pine.

"Did the Norway pine come from Norway?" asked Ben once of Uncle Erickson.

"Not that I know of," said Uncle Erickson. "The Norway pines have been growing in America for a long time, but a whole lot of people around here came from Norway."

Then the jack pine was another kind of pine. Nobody seemed to have a good word to say for

the jack pine. Yet the jack pine would grow as tall in some places, as the white pine, and the trunks looked as if they would make pretty good boards. The jack pine has a slightly yellowish foliage, with stubby and strong leaves resembling the leaves of the spruce, but sparser and coarser. There were places where only the jack pine grew, in fact the way trees grew in communities was one of the things that Ben and Paul often observed. In some places birch trees were most numerous, and the same way with poplar, balm of Gilead, white pine, tamarack and spruce. The hardwoods were often mixed, oak, ash, maple and elm growing together in a friendly way, no one kind being much more numerous than another.

One morning the boys were in the woods and the Hermit came along, looking for Pope and Dryden; they had been gone for two days. The boys went along with the Hermit to find the pigs. The Hermit did not seem to be worrying much about the pigs, for he was all the time finding things to admire, such as the view

across the lake, the creamy color of the bark of the birch tree, the smell of the raspberry bushes when the sun was on them, the appearance of the sky when there were fleecy clouds sailing high up against the blue, the heron that flew heavily across the reeds that grew in low water, or the red squirrel that sat up and used his front feet for hands. The Hermit said that red squirrels and raccoons and bears and monkeys and men were all related once. He seemed to care more for what he saw going and coming than for the pigs that he might find if he looked long enough. Maybe the Hermit kept pigs just to have them run away so he could go after them and see things on the way. You enjoy looking at things by the road more if you are going on business and see things that you are not expecting. If you go out to see things you may not be so pleased as if you just run on things. Anyhow that was the way it seemed with the Hermit. Then sometimes he would be going along, with plenty of things to see, and he would not appear to notice anything

at all. The boys would talk to him and he would not answer or answer as if his mind were miles away. The Hermit had a piece of poetry that he would quote:

Most sweet it is with uplifted eyes
To pace the ground if path there be or none,
While a fair region round the traveler lies
Which he forbears again to look upon;
Pleased rather with some soft ideal scene,
The work of fancy, or some happy tone
Of meditation, slipping in between
The beauty coming and the beauty gone.

That was the Hermit.

The Hermit's pigs kept him going. They could run like the wind and they wanted to see the world. They would be grunting along in contentment and discover a path. Then off they would go. A path had the same effect upon them that a saloon has on a drunkard. They could not resist a path. If they walked into a new path in the woods they would seem to crank up by twisting their tails and off they'd go. They might have come back even if the Hermit had never gone for them, for

they got fish heads and boiled potatoes to eat at the Hermit's when they came for meals. The Hermit's shore extended down the lake two or three miles and was connected with woods and marshes and some farm land in a wilderness that one could hunt pigs in for days.

The Hermit liked birds and four-footed animals, astronomy and trees. In the daytime he probably liked trees best. He liked old trees that were just about ready to fall over in a wind.

"Bare, ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang,"

he said when the boys and he went under a dead white pine, when they were hunting the pigs.

They all came along to a tree that had been struck by lightning. It was split and shivered into splinters.

Ben said it must have been an awful bolt that came down and struck the tree.

The Hermit asked him what made him say the bolt came down.

“What other way could it come?” asked Ben.

“Out of the ground,” said the Hermit. “Sometimes trees are struck by bolts that come from above and sometimes they are shattered by bolts that come out of the ground. This tree trunk is splintered and broken to pieces near the ground. It was struck by a bolt from the earth.”

“The earth was the terminal from which the spark jumped,” agreed Paul understandingly.

“Where have I lived all my life?” asked Ben, amazed. “I never heard of lightning striking that way.”

The Hermit said something about high and low potential and positive and negative, and Paul understood.

“I always thought bolts came from the sky,” said Ben. “I thought the cellar was the safest place in the house in a thunderstorm. That must be a mistake.”

“Are you afraid of lightning?” asked Paul.

“No,” said Ben, “but I don’t think the flash is a good thing for eyes, so I go indoors.”

“If you want to be safe,” said the Hermit, “come up to my cabin to get away from lightning. I have a metal roof.”

“And you have grounded the corners,” interrupted Paul, who could not restrain himself.

“Did you get that in school?” inquired Ben.

“Studied electricity,” said Paul, abashed for having taken the Hermit’s words out of his mouth.

The Hermit told how he had run copper cable from each of the four corners of his cabin, entering the cable into the ground until moisture was reached, thus providing a path of least resistance for the electric spark in case of a thunderstorm. He was as safe inside as a man would be handling a live wire with rubber gloves.

“I never knew what those wires were for,” said Ben.

“I noticed them the first time I saw the

cabin," said Paul, "and I guessed what they were for."

"You did not guess," said the Hermit pleasantly, "you knew."

Paul felt better than he had before since he had been in camp. The Hermit, the HERMIT, had approved of his knowledge. Since Paul had been living at the cottage he had felt so ignorant that he could have cried. But now he had found out that some of his knowledge was just like the Hermit's, and the Hermit knew everything, and poetry too. "Jimminy crickets," he thought, "just watch me when I get back to school and see me bone in."

They passed the shattered tree and looked at everything more closely. There are those who have eyes and see not, the Hermit said. It is only when one sees what is back of what he sees that he really knows what he looks at. Look for causes, said the Hermit.

But no pigs.

The Hermit and the boys went on and on. Paul was feeling elated and the walk would not

have seemed long if it had continued around the lake and then home, which would have been more miles than red pigs could have traveled, rooting as they do and jumping up and down with their hind legs with a funny chopping motion. The party was now a long way from the top of Squaw Point, when another opportunity for Paul to "recite" occurred.

There was a road, little traveled, which ran over and around the high bluff where they now were in search of the pigs. There was a path by the side of the road and a few feet higher up than the roadbed, for this had been cut down to lower the grade. The Hermit was in the lead and Paul was behind as they went single file up the steep path. Far below an automobile was heard coming up the road. It took a good driver to make the ascent and to judge by the sound the driver was not the most experienced. It was a heavy car and as it was passing, Paul saw that it was the same make as the one his father drove, which was going to be brought down later in the season.

As the car came along Paul was figuring what he would do if he were running his father's car up that road and anything should happen. He had run the car many times, but usually over level roads. He soon had a chance to apply his ideas.

The driver was a young woman, slender, richly dressed, with a bad complexion, and excitable. She appeared worried as the car labored by Paul, who could tell that it was running in middle gear. Just beyond was another of the several sharp grades in the bluff road; when part way up this grade the young woman tried to shift gears and the engine stopped. Paul read every sound and knew just what was happening. The girl tried to put on the brakes, but the car began to back and she screamed and turned her head toward Paul, who was now abreast of the automobile. He saw something had to be done and done quickly and swung himself down from the path to the running board and into the driving compartment. He pulled the emergency brake, but

something was wrong and the car gained momentum backward, with three women and a child on the rear seat. Something came into Paul's mind that he had been dreaming he would do if his father's car should get beyond control on that road, and he instantly put the plan into effect. He took the wheel and held the car to the road as it passed down the first sharp descent and moved over a few feet of rather level road and again began to gain speed upon reaching the second steep place in the downward passage.

The passengers on the rear seat leaned sharply forward as the car yielded and began to go backward, as if they might by taking this position hold it where it was. The lake gleamed through the fringe of trees at that point in the road and the prospect of going over the roof-like slope which lay to one side of the road and plunging into the lake was not such as to make the outlook a pleasant one. The young woman, from whose hands Paul had taken the wheel, was snatching at the brake

lever, but was so over-wrought that her efforts would have amounted to but little, even if the brakes had been working properly. Far up the path Ben and the Hermit saw the car disappear around the curve at the second declivity and waited, aghast, to hear the final crash.

But no crash came. Paul held the car to the road and while the frightened women were awaiting their doom, he was, not headed for, but back-ended for, a bed of sand by the road, which he had in his mind's eye distinctly and which he now saw near. The car drove into the sand and came to a dead stop. The women gasped gratitude and Ben and the Hermit appeared on the scene.

"You have saved our lives," exclaimed one of the women, an elderly person, who took off her glasses to wipe them and her eyes too.

"Father has a car just like this," replied Paul, blushing.

"It was the emergency brake that wouldn't hold," declared the girl who drove the car.

“Probably has oil on it,” said Paul. “Maybe you put too much oil into the differential.”

“How could you keep the road?” asked another occupant of the car, a woman with reddish hair, large hazel eyes, a pale complexion, a white silk shirtwaist and a baby.

“I left the gears in mesh,” said Paul, “that held the car back a little, and then I used the foot brake too. I thought I could land the car in the sand. I’ve practised backing at home. The garage is a hundred yards from the street and I back out just for practice. I know this car from A to Z.”

Ben and the Hermit had stood near and were too proud for words, especially Ben. The Hermit could probably have done just as well for the ladies, but in a different way, for his car was not like theirs and he might not have known just how to aim at a sand bank, but then he would have rescued them somehow or other, so Ben thought. But for Paul to be so heady was wonderful.

The ladies finished gasping and arranged

their hair and then the question was how to get the car out of the sand. Paul knew the answer to that too. He found a spade in the car and dug out from under the wheels and then poured water on the sand. Wet sand and dry sand are two different things, Paul explained. Even Ben did not know that, not the way Paul did. Paul took the wheel and the car gave a boost to itself, with the Hermit and Ben pushing, and out she popped and was back on the road.

The women all insisted that Paul should drive the car over the bluff road. While Ben and the Hermit were waiting for him to come back, Ben said that he wished he knew as much about cars as Paul did.

"I never dreamed he knew all that about cars," said Ben.

"That's because you never saw him around a car," replied the Hermit. "If you know about cars and you are not where they are your knowledge does not show up, not unless you talk about yourself a good deal, and that would not be modest."

“Do you think his going to school helped much?” inquired Ben.

“He’s learned his lessons pretty well,” replied the Hermit. “I could tell that from his knowing about my lightning protection. I have learned much outside of schools, but I wouldn’t part with what I learned at the university.”

“Did you go to a university?” asked Ben in great surprise.

“In Scotland,” said the Hermit. “Edinburgh.”

“I should think us boys would make you tired,” said Ben.

“Who knows but Ben Long will be a great man?” replied the Hermit. “A great inventor, builder, poet?”

“Not poet,” said Ben. “But Jerusalem jinks, I’ll be somebody or bust.”

After Paul returned the three went on again through the woods. The Hermit carried an ax and would occasionally knock over a powdery old stump and say how long ago he thought the

tree stood. He pointed out trees that had scars on one side extending several feet upward from the ground. The scars were made, he explained, by fire; they told of fires that had run through the woods years and years before. There were no scars on the trees that stood higher up on the bluffs and the Hermit said that the forest fires of long ago could not climb up there. The grass was not plentiful enough or humus was lacking, so the fires burned out on the flats.

Paul picked up a green pine cone with its petty drops of gum, from the new crop of cones in the topmost branches, hanging in a way to remind one of bunches of bananas. Then they found spruce cones, shining in the very tops of the spruce trees and looking as if turned out of brown wood and varnished, much smaller than the white pine cones. They saw chipmunks pulling pine cones apart and eating something that appeared to taste pretty good. There were chokecherry and pin cherry trees even among the tall trees of the forest, though

these cherries are rarely found except in open places and by the roadsides.

Duck Lake, lying near the big lake, but not connected with it now, was on the way back to the Hermit's, for they had given up the pigs for that day. Once upon a time Duck Lake was connected with the big lake and once upon a time Squaw Point may have been an island. But now Duck Lake is shriveled into a reedy pond where pickerel and bass may be caught any day and where ducks alight in numbers varying with the imagination of the beholder, but in great numbers truly. The Hermit said he might plant celery on his side of Duck Lake.

Paul asked the Hermit what time he liked best in the woods. The Hermit never answered that question, not the way it was asked. But after a long silence he spoke of an August night, with a full moon. The spruces, motionless, with their peaked tops, looked like cathedral spires and the great elm on Squaw Point, with its proud upward sweep of mighty

limbs, was like Gothic arches. Vapor would form on the still lake, to move and vanish at dawn. Where the evergreens were, as on the sandy prairie below the Point, there would be vast uplifted aisles showing in the shining grayness, and these aisles would be filled with a light like a vaporous silver and the magic silence of the lustrous hours of full moonlight would thrill like sweet but faint music. Spectral brightness mixed with night possessed the August pines and spruces and far tamaracks and birches with their creamy bark, and softened and refined the woods till one might fancy the whole harsh world had passed away and a celestial world had come in its place.

The Hermit went on, talking so, and the boys listened and forgot all about the pigs.

They reached the Hermit's.

"Sorry we couldn't help you to find the pigs," said Paul.

"I'll look for them when I'm after the cows to-night," volunteered Ben.

The boys went around the corner of the cot-

tage and ran into the pigs. They had come home of themselves.

“There’s no place like home,” observed the Hermit, laughing.

VII

THE BOYS IN THE COTTAGE

PAUL's mother, Aunt Dorothy and the children had to be away from the cottage for at least a week, being called back to the city, where Mr. Parker was. Paul wanted to stay at the cottage and it was finally decided that Paul and Ben might live at the cottage until the family returned. They were to keep house and get their own meals. The return of the family to the city was unexpected, so the boys found themselves upon their resources from the first. Mrs. Parker cautioned Paul about the lake and had time to say little else before leaving.

The boys stood in front of the cottage as Mrs. Parker and the others left for the station; they waved their hands and felt they were sure to have a fine time by themselves. There was

a gone feeling in Paul when his mother was out of sight, but on the whole spirits were high. The forenoon passed almost before they knew it, but the afternoon was much longer. They were beginning to think about what they would have for supper when Bill Olson came into view. Bill was looking about with a considerable swing of his long neck and large head and saw the boys. He stopped his horse, which instantly swung toward the grass of the roadside and fell to devouring it, the hame collar in the meantime rising and falling like a log on the lake under a west wind.

“Family home?” inquired Bill.

“All gone away,” replied Paul.

“Pretty lonesome, aren’t you?” Bill asked.

“Not so very,” answered Paul. “They’re coming back again.”

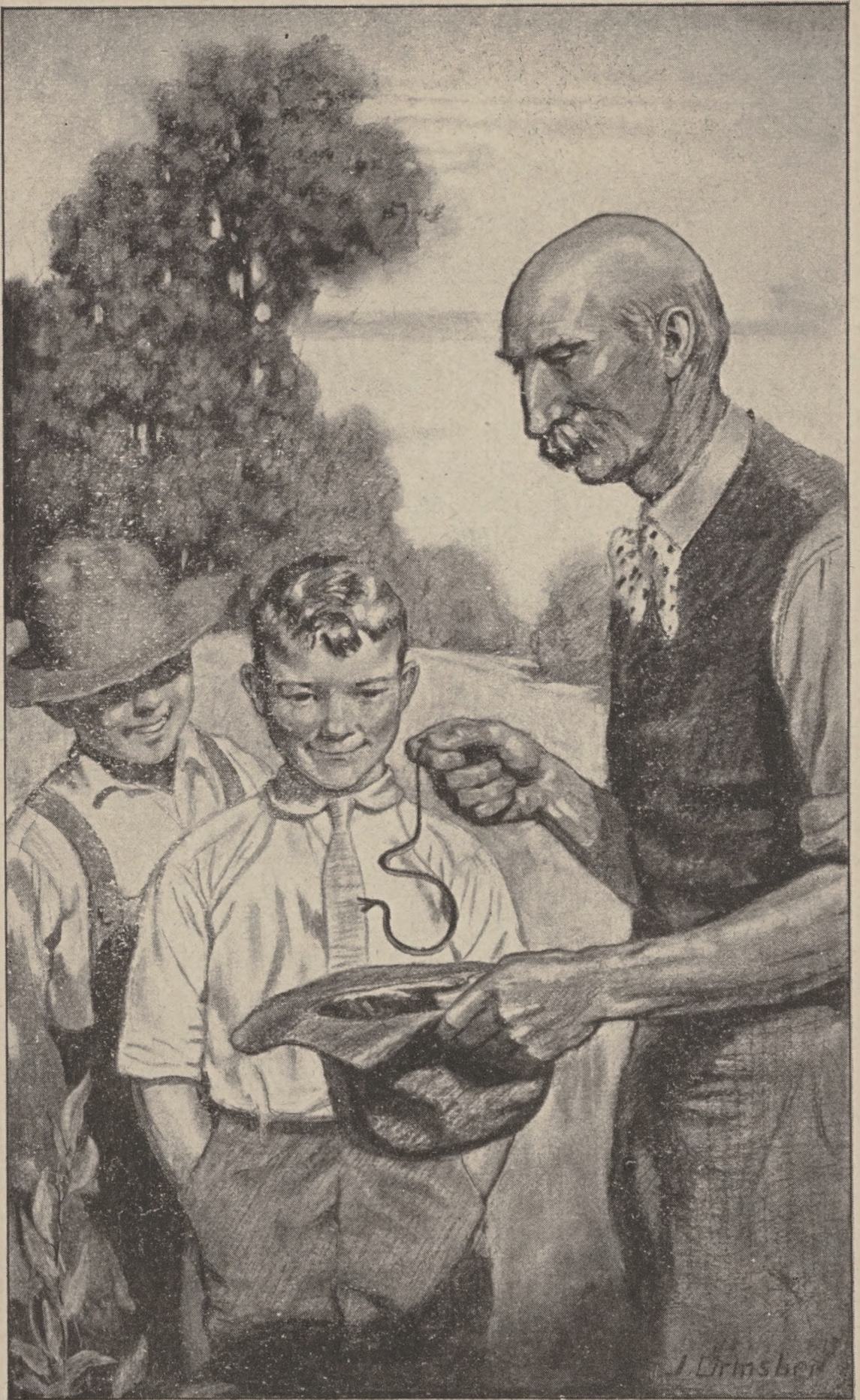
“Have a good time,” urged Bill, smiling and showing where teeth were lacking midway back on the jaw.

Bill had got out of the wagon and was spying and looking along the ground and among the

bushes and trees, as was his wont. He always gave the impression of intense interest in things out of doors. If he stood beside a tree he would try its bark with his hands. He said that he liked the feel of bark, especially the bark of a small oak tree, one just about large enough for him to close his hand around. Then too he would go along partly bent over, spying the ground as if tracking a small animal whose tracks were faint, or as if looking for four-leaf clovers or trying to find the first specimens of the season of something or other, like strawberries. This time he saw a flat stone in the sand and upon it a garter snake coiled up. Bill picked up the snake, wriggling and darting out its little red tongue, which looked like a flexible needle.

“Won’t it bite you?” asked Paul, much startled.

“Perfectly harmless variety,” answered Bill, smiling a wide-mouthed smile. “See how big his tummy is,” he added. “He’s probably swallowed a toad.”



BILL TOOK OFF HIS HAT AND PUT THE SNAKE IN IT

“Just the same, I shouldn’t want to handle him,” said Paul.

At this Bill took off his hat, put the snake into it, and returned the hat to his head with a skillful move. Bill’s head was bald too, like a peeled basswood limb. Bill laughed as the boys looked surprised and edged away from him.

“Keeps my head cool,” remarked Bill joyously. “Snakes are cold-blooded and they sure are fine for keeping your brains cool.”

Bill strolled up toward the cottage, snake in his hat. The boys came along. Ben said it was nothing to pick up a snake; anybody could do that.

“When are the folks coming back?” asked Bill.

“In about a week,” said Paul. “Maybe less than a week.”

“There’s a hat hanging in that tree,” remarked Bill. “Looks like a woman’s. Better take your mother’s hat in, Paul, she might want it.”

“That’s Aunt Dorothy’s hat,” said Paul.

"Then she's coming back too," deduced Bill.

"Better take good care of it," added Bill.

"Womenfolks appreciate doing a thing like that for them. Keep the yard picked up too, neat and nice. They will like that when they all get back, your Aunt Dorothy and all. Throw the slops away from the door and get up a good supply of wood so they can go to cooking when they come in."

Bill wandered about the cottage and looked everything over. Finally he came around to the pump.

"If that pump should give you any trouble," said Bill, with an almost proprietary interest in this convenience, "just run a piece of baling wire round this here projection and fetch it under here. That type of pump will sometimes come apart, particularly if you pump unsteady. Better wire it for safety."

Bill worked the pump handle and bent over to put his mouth to the spout for a drink. He was steadying his lips at the pump spout when he pushed his hat back a trifle from his fore-

head. This opened a passage between Bill's bald head and the hatband at the rear. The snake, which Bill had quite forgotten, saw its opportunity and shot out of its prison, diving into Bill's neckband and going out of sight down Bill's back inside his shirt.

"Suffering Moses!" Bill shrieked. "What was that?"

"Just the snake," said Ben, and both boys laughed till they got out of breath from laughing and became inaudible, and then laughed loud again.

"So it was," said Bill, joining in the laughter. "I wasn't expecting him down my spine. But he's gone now," he added as the garter snake glided under the cottage.

"Take good care of yourselves, boys," said Bill, as he climbed into his wagon and began to gather in the slack of the reins which would eventually bring up the grazing horse's head. "If you want anything you call on me. And then you can tell the family that Bill Olson was a good friend."

“I’d like to know one thing now,” said Paul. “That’s how to get rid of that snake under the cottage.”

“Like as not you’ll step on it with your bare feet when you’re up in the night and then you can kill it if you want to. But they’re great for keeping your brains cool,” said Bill, who drove off in fine humor.

For supper the boys had bread and boiled eggs. There were no dishes to wash, as they used pieces of a cardboard shoe box for plates and each man was to keep his own knife, fork and spoon, which could be wiped off. In the morning they had bacon. They left the bacon fat in the frying pan to use for frying fish. They decided to use up all the bacon before frying any fish. If they should fry fish and then want to fry bacon they would have to wash the frying pan; otherwise the pan would make the bacon taste fishy. But first use up the bacon and let the bacon fat pile up in the frying pan and then they could fry fish to their heart’s content. The pan would always be

greased and ready and as for its tasting of fish, that was what they expected when they ate fish. The boys had trouble with the frying pan soon after. Things burned in it.

“Maybe that’s the reason why Mother washes the frying pan, because things burn if it isn’t washed,” remarked Paul.

“They wash the frying-pan at our house too,” observed Ben. “I always thought it was because women are fussy. Maybe you have to wash a frying pan.”

“We’ll give it a washing once in a while,” conceded Paul.

“We ought to tidy up here,” thought Paul one evening after a day out of doors.

“What can we do?” asked Ben, who was willing to help.

“My idea would be to get the millers out,” said Paul. “They’re alive and the cots and dishes are not. Let’s make a raid on the millers and get their eggs out too.”

Ben rolled up a newspaper and began batting the millers that were crawling about inside

the porch screen. The cottage had a vast porch, screened, and millers got in where the rafters joined with the siding. Ben went about killing millers and herding them to the screen door and then shooing them outside. He would catch them by the wings and go outside and hurl them down upon the porch step, either killing them or stunning them so there "was no fun in it," he said. He struck savagely at the millers upon the screening.

Paul went about with the fire shovel, looking for miller's eggs, of which there were not a few. When he found a collection of these beautifully arranged but noisome and tough eggs, he would smash them with the edge of the shovel, which he drew across the deposit with vindictive glee. In the meantime the sound of Ben's thumping the survivors told what he was doing.

"Most done," shouted Ben.

"But look at the screening," was Paul's comment.

Ben had been so infatuated with hammering

the millers that he had not noticed that he was bulging the screening outward or pushing it off with nearly every blow.

“What will they say?” Ben asked in consternation.

“I guess they will say that some one will have to pound the millers against the screening from the outside and drive it back into place,” Paul remarked.

“Tell you what we’ll do,” said Ben. “We’ll go at the screening the first thing in the morning and fix it all up again.”

“You were thinking of killing the millers and forgot about the screening,” said Paul.

“Just the way Bill Olson forgot about the snake when he went to get a drink,” agreed Ben ruefully.

For breakfast the supply of prepared breakfast foods proved useful. There was condensed milk, which the boys did not like so very well, but the other kind of milk could not be kept in a tin can that required no washing. They read the directions on the can and followed them to

the letter, diluting the milk with an equal amount of water.

“How long do you suppose a can of this milk would keep?” asked Ben.

“Forever,” said Paul.

Paul would get the breakfast food and the condensed milk on the table while Ben would go out to the tub for such dishes as experience had shown were indispensable, like saucers. At night they would put to soak any dishes that had accumulated during the day and before breakfast Ben would fish them out of the water and dry them by swinging them, thus saving the use of a towel.

One of the articles of diet was raisins. Paul had read that Enos Mills, or Judge Lindsey, could live for days on raisins. He said they were a perfect food, containing everything the human body needs.

“Why haven’t other people found that out?” Ben desired to know.

“It would save a lot of dishwashing,” said Paul.

“There’s probably a trust that wants to keep on selling dishes and so only a few people have learned about raisins,” thought Ben. “Uncle Erickson takes a paper that keeps him mad all the time about the trusts.”

While Ben would be putting the dishes to soak Paul would do the sweeping. All the crumbs he swept out of the door. These attracted flies, which would darken the screen and come through the door whenever opened. The boys tried to outwit the flies by not having any crumbs on the floor. This they accomplished by holding their heads well over the table when they ate. Whatever crumbs fell went on the table and could be thrown directly into the stove.

“Funny we did **not** think of this way of eating before,” said Ben.

“Works all right now, while we are alone,” Paul replied.

The boys went fishing regularly and ate fish until they never wanted to see another on the table. Then they gave away what they caught, taking a string up to Bill Olson.

"I suppose Bill would prefer eels," thought Paul. "He's so fond of snakes."

"The picks are the next thing to snakes," said Ben, "and we're giving him picks."

After becoming cloyed with fish-eating the boys turned more largely to a vegetable diet, Uncle Erickson's garden furnishing a few things, but there was a supply of dried loganberries and dried peaches in the cottage. These they soaked up and put sugar on. They thought these might be better cooked, but that would require more housework, pans and kettles and building a fire and the rest, so why not eat them uncooked? They did. After a few meals with dried fruits the boys thought fresh fruits would be better and gathered berries and wild plums, but the latter were too green yet.

The boys kept the cottage in fine shape by keeping out of it most of the time. They kept the windows shut and everything was left undisturbed as much as possible. Paul had a way of sweeping that was an improvement, at least it was different from the way his mother

and Aunt Dorothy swept. He would wait for a wind and then he would open all the doors and windows; by the boys' helping along the bigger pieces of stuff on the floor the wind would sweep off much of the accumulation. A south wind was no good for sweeping, as the dust and litter blew under the cots in the "dormitory," which was the end of the porch used for outdoor sleeping, containing the cots of the whole family. There came a sort of ancient odor about the cottage, which appeared odd considering how much shut up the cottage was and how clean it was kept. It began to smell like Bill Olson's house, which Bill kept closed while he was in the fields or away from home. When the boys took the fish up to Bill's they noticed the close smell, as if the rag carpet had never been taken out and beaten or perhaps not swept, for it looked even and packed with a kind of filling that was not made when the carpet was. When you put your elbow on the table at Bill's and took it away there would be a track left in the dust. The cottage began

to have much the same odor as Bill Olson's bachelor house and the boys agreed that a house would get close if no one stayed at home regularly. Bill Olson had a violin and the cottage smelled like the case when Bill showed the violin to the boys—old and musty-like.

The food was not exactly what the boys were used to and they had bad dreams. Ben dreamed an animal dream. He was out in the forest, in his dream. There was a great high cliff with a slide. At the bottom of the slide stood an immense lion, whose jaws opened halfway back to his tail. Ben was right beside the lion and scared stiff. Every minute some kind of animal would come down the slide. It would claw and claw at the slippery surface but come faster and faster and go plump into the lion's jaws. The lion would brace himself for the next animal and swallow him the same way. All kinds of animals kept coming and between swallows the lion would nudge Ben with his nose and say, "You're next." But the animals kept coming and being swallowed,—rabbits,

mice, rats, dogs, raccoons, horses, buffaloes. The supply kept up, though once in a while some animal would stick to the slide for a while and the lion would glare at Ben. Ben jumped every time the lion's nose nudged him and he tried to get away, but he could not make his feet go. The lion was getting tired of waiting for the animals, which were coming a little too slow for him, and he turned upon Ben and said he would eat Ben. At this Ben jumped and tried to get away. Just then Paul asked Ben what he was trying to do—was something the matter with him? Ben said he had been dreaming; he said he must have eaten something. Paul said his mouth did not taste right and thought they ought to do more cooking.

Paul and Ben believed it would be better if they could do the cooking out of doors. This would save sweeping up and it would be more fun, more like camping. They hung a kettle on a pole, which was fixed to two stakes driven into the ground. They used a green pole, so it would not catch fire. They wired the kettle

to the green pole. As the prepared breakfast foods had been used up, having been on the table at every meal, the boys thought they would cook some breakfast food and have it cold the rest of the day.

There were several kinds of uncooked foods in the cottage and the boys could not agree upon any one kind. They finally put some of each kind into the kettle and cooked the combination. If every kind was good to eat why would not all be good if cooked together?

Keeping up the fire required much wood, but it was a pleasure to get it. The boys ranged about looking for pieces that would make the fire burn well. There was a space between the edge of the woods and where the kettle was and the boys thought out a way to make their work easier. Instead of dragging the wood to the kettle they would have a conveyor.

Using a wire clothesline they made an overhead track for a pulley to run upon. Ben borrowed a dog chain from Uncle Erickson's anchor for a tackle to connect with the pulley

and support the load of fuel. At first the boys relied upon the overhead track to hold up only one end of a log, but later they perfected the carrier so that they could load a wire basket with fuel and send it to the kettle with little effort. When the invention was completed the boys liked to use it so well that they would keep a fire going and just boil water. Bill Olson saw the smoke that kept rolling up from near the cottage and came around to see what was up.

"I vum," he said admiringly. "That is sure some trolley. But be careful, boys; don't let the sparks set the woods afire."

Word had come that the family would be back "tomorrow." This set the boys to work making ready. They wanted the place to look as well or better than when Mrs. Parker took the train. They made up the cots they had been sleeping in, which were all the cots, for the boys had slept around. They swept the whole cottage floor with a broom and pulled the window shades even.

Mrs. Parker, who was an affectionate mother, rather thin and with glasses, was happy to see Paul, and she looked warmly at Ben, who began to edge toward home as the Parkers came. The boys followed Mrs. Parker as she went on a swift tour of inspection while the rest of the family, including Mr. Parker, were unloading packages from the automobile in which they came.

"Why, Paul, the towels," exclaimed Mrs. Parker.

"What's wrong with them, Mother?" asked Paul. "They are just as you left them. We haven't used any others."

"It is just as well to throw a soiled towel to the wash and hang up a clean one," explained Mrs. Parker.

"How nicely you have made up the cots," Mrs. Parker exclaimed. "They look as if they had not been slept in. You must have got up bright and early to do up the housework."

"Not so very," replied Paul. "We made up the cots yesterday."

“Didn’t you use cots last night?” asked Mrs. Parker.

“No,” answered Paul. “We slept on the floor.”

Mrs. Parker went near the outdoor kettle.

“What in the world is this?” she asked.

“Breakfast food,” said Paul.

A little later Mrs. Parker wanted to hang something out on the clothesline and went to where it used to be.

“Paul,” she called, “what has become of the clothesline?”

“It’s there,” answered Paul.

“I don’t see it,” said his mother, who had not detected the overhead carrier.

“It’s there,” repeated Paul, followed about by Ben. “It’s there; only we’re using it for a carrier.”

Mrs. Parker looked at the wire contrivance and called Mr. Parker.

“What shall I do for a clothesline?” she asked.

“Hang the clothes on the line where it is,”

proposed Paul. "We won't need it for breakfast food all the time."

Mr. Parker said the idea looked reasonable enough to him.

VIII

BEN GIVES SWIMMING LESSONS

MR. PARKER wished to learn how to swim in fresh water. Not that he was much of a swimmer in water that was not fresh. He was not an ocean swimmer nor a fresh water swimmer, but he had swum in Salt Lake at Salt Lake City, Utah, where anybody, even a baby, can swim, for it is impossible for any one to sink in Salt Lake. People go in and bob about on the surface, being scarcely able to go under far enough to hide their nakedness in a bathing suit. Mr. Parker had managed to swim in Salt Lake, but nowhere else. He had been brought up in Iowa and had not been very well as a boy, either of which reasons might account for inability to swim. He said he was ashamed that he had never learned, but if people could learn to dance after forty, why

shouldn't he learn to swim? Mr. Parker was a plump man, with fat cheeks, and small even teeth colored with cigars, and a sense of humor. He had a fine sense of humor and would tell stories and laugh heartily at them—laugh to start off the others. He was always trying to cheer up Mrs. Parker, who, he seemed to think, was a trifle too serious and even nervous. He drove a big car and had expensive cigars and yet would tell of having to borrow money. He was rich and yet he wasn't. He had just two weeks in which to learn to swim. They were going to put a swimming tank in the new Masonic temple in his town and he had to know how to swim. That was one thing he wanted to accomplish on his vacation, and he could not begin too soon. He had brought bathing suits for the entire family and had his where he could lay his hands on it. "Live or die, survive or perish, sink or SWIM," he said was his sentiments.

"Can you swim?" Mr. Parker asked Ben with playful ferocity.

“Paddle around a little in the water,” answered Ben.

“Come off,” said Mr. Parker. “They say you can swim like a duck and dive like a kingfisher. Can you teach me?”

Ben said he could teach people but he was not sure he could teach a man who was so big.

“Jehoshaphat!” said Mr. Parker, laughing so his lower shirt buttons jiggled. “The strokes must be all the same for any and everybody. You just give me the idea; show me how you take the water and get off and how you keep going and I will do the rest. I will teach my wife too.”

Ben had already shown Paul about swimming, using what he called the “frog steamboat” method. Ben showed Paul how to lower himself into the water up to his neck and then shoot off on the surface of the water by making use of the spring in his knees. By beginning his arm strokes while his body was shooting forward from the force of knee action Paul found it possible to keep going for several

strokes, and Ben assured him that practice was all he needed to become a good swimmer. Ben of course required no frog steamboat method to get under way; he would fall into the water with a crash, face downwards, sideways, backwards, or turn a somersault from a boat or the diving tower, which was originally a grindstone frame, but now, with additions built upon it, was a structure about five feet high used by Ben for performing aquatic feats in the lake. Ben liked to stand on top of his tower and wave to the Hermit as the latter passed at a distance in his sailboat, consisting of his rowboat with a pirate-like sail of khaki cut square and rigged to the bow. Ben's tower somewhat resembled an oil derrick. Equipped with his tower, Uncle Erickson's boat and his bathing suit Ben was almost a marine animal.

Ben had a bathing suit with him most of the time, as it consisted of his overalls. All he had to do to get ready for the water was to take off his shirt and throw down his hat. When any of the boys from the farms back from the

lake came along and wanted to go in swimming Ben would be in the water before they had finished a sentence. Mr. Parker's talk about having Ben teach him how to swim had made Ben think twice about a bathing suit, and he decided that he would try to be ready with the pair of overalls that had the built-on suspenders. The other pair had to be buttoned so tight around the waist to keep them on that they stopped the circulation anyhow.

Shortly after Mr. Parker had spoken about learning how to swim Ben loaded the tower into Uncle Erickson's boat and pulled up to the Parker beach. He rolled the tower off into the lake, dropped the oars, and at once the Parker family was attracted by loud sounds and splashings from the water.

"It's Ben out there," shouted Paul in glee.

"No time like the present," said Mr. Parker, laying a cigar on the two-by-four plate under the rafters of the porch. Whereupon he took his bathing suit and disappeared in the woods. Presently he reappeared walking slowly and

painfully, every little while stopping suddenly and jerking up a foot, on account of sharp things he stepped on. His fat white calves gleamed like a moonrise as he picked his way out from the trees and passed in front of the cottage toward the lake.

“Hey, boy, I’m coming,” he shouted to Ben.

Ben’s answer was a somersault and a swim under water, coming up and shaking his head to get the water out of his ears.

“You look like a drowned rat,” called out Mr. Parker.

Ben paused from his feats long enough to say, “You can’t swim without getting wet.”

“Can’t, eh?” observed Mr. Parker as he came gingerly up to the water’s edge, balanced himself on his left foot and touched the water with the toes of his right.

“Say, you,” he shouted, “is this water warm?”

“Never gets very warm in this part of Minnesota,” said Ben. “These lakes never get what you would call hot.”

“What do you do about it?” inquired Mr. Parker.

“Go in anyhow,” counseled Ben. “Get wet all over and then you don’t mind it.”

“How deep is it?” Mr. Parker desired to know.

“It slopes off gradually,” explained Ben. “I will tell you when you get near deep water, but you won’t; it’s a quarter of a mile, most, out to where you’d be over your head.”

The beach was an ideal one for bathing, being sandy and clean, not a stone at the edge of the water or under water. The depth of the lake increased imperceptibly for a long distance, the sandy shore having been beaten by the waves for centuries as the lake level lowered and retreated, as it were, from the sloping roof of the land. The Parker beach was on the eastern side of the lake, where the west winds had swept and ground the bottom, making it but a continuation of the level sandy flat on which the Parker cottage stood among the pines.

But the water was not exactly hot, nor even warm, on the day Mr. Parker chose for beginning swimming practice. The sun was bright and the air was warm, but the water——

Mr. Parker could be heard talking to himself as he forced his white legs out into the lake. He was now in halfway up to his knees.

“Better get wet all over,” said Ben.

Mr. Parker took up water in his hands and applied it to his forehead and spilled a spoonful upon his chest.

“Get wet and you won’t notice the water,” urged Ben. “Go in all over.”

Mr. Parker sat down and yelled. The water came only to his waist.

“Stretch out,” suggested Ben.

Mr. Parker went on his hands and knees and inundated the lower part of his chest up to his chin and then by effort of will sank himself fiercely until he was under water, with his stomach on the sandy bottom.

“Good for you,” said Ben.

“What do I do next?” inquired Mr. Parker, who was now up and coming, walking and splashing out toward deeper water, his back appearing in its wetness and breadth something like the top of a new automobile in a rain.

Ben explained the frog steamboat method, and Mr. Parker tried it; he went down all over.

“I got water in both ears,” expostulated Mr. Parker.

“It runs in,” said Ben.

Just then Paul appeared on the beach in his bathing suit. He walked quickly into the water and dove out into it where it was quite shallow, wetting himself all over in no time.

“That’s the way to do it, I guess,” observed Mr. Parker. “Instead of killing yourself by inches. Say, I feel all right now; the water’s fine.”

“You will get so you won’t mind going right in,” said Ben. “You won’t stop to think about it. Your skin hardens up. It’s like getting your ears used to cold weather in the winter. The first cold day you think they’ll freeze off

your head, but after a while they will stand anything, if you don't freeze them."

Ben gave Mr. Parker further suggestions and showed him how a boy swims. He told Mr. Parker to make his arms and legs go at the same time, that is, to keep them all going. Mr. Parker would almost learn how to support himself in the water when a cloudy discoloration of the water would show that he had dragged bottom or had resorted to pushing himself with a foot.

"Use your legs," Ben urged enthusiastically, "swing 'em out; kick your feet off. Make scissors with them. Do the way the frogs do; reach out with your hind legs."

Mr. Parker thought that possibly he had to displace too much water when he tried to swim; his waist-line was large and when he went under he said he made the tide rise. Boys have almost no stomachs and so the resistance of the water is less for them, being like pickerel with long narrow bodies.

"But whales swim," said Ben.

“Then I can,” declared Mr. Parker, disappointed because he had not learned in one lesson.

Ben showed Mrs. Parker and Dorothy about swimming. Mrs. Parker wore a bathing cap and looked as if she were going to a party. She listened closely to what Ben said, which was not much, and especially watched him to see how he swam. She was in earnest about learning. She had made up her mind. The first time she tried she went from a standing position, her head held back gracefully; she looked as if she were dismounting from a high wagon, with some one ready to take her in his arms to prevent her getting smashed on the sidewalk. She gave a look and shut her eyes, and went upon the water that way, and struck bottom. She seemed surprised when she came up with water running down from her nose. She was too graceful, if anything, in her take-off.

Ben did not like to say much, but upon being urged he suggested that she begin by keeping

her eyes open. The water wouldn't bite, he said. Mrs. Parker did exactly as she was told and learned to keep her eyes open. She did not seem to dread cold water half as much as Mr. Parker; she seemed more used to suffering. She was conscientious about learning to swim and went at it as if it were a club paper. Probably that was the reason why for a time she made such good progress day after day. It wasn't long until she could swim nearly a rod. But she stuck at a rod and Ben wondered why she could not go farther. She said her strength seemed to give out when she had gone that far. But Dorothy, Dorothy got so she could swim well and sort of walk with her arms through the water, laughing all the time. Ben worried over the lack of progress shown by Mrs. Parker.

"She swims just about as far on top of the water as I do under it," he thought. Then Ben had an idea—women are funny. The next time, he raced along ahead of Mrs. Parker and watched her expression. It didn't look natural,

and the farther she went the more she looked as if she might blow up.

“Do you breathe?” Ben asked her.

“Perhaps I don’t; I hadn’t thought about that,” she replied. She had not breathed while swimming. Then she tried breathing and swimming at the same time and could not swim.

Ben told her that she never could swim very far unless she could breathe and swim too. Finally she learned how to breathe and swim at the same time and she was happy.

Mr. Parker thought his wife was doing nobly, and he was too. At first he seemed to churn up the water altogether too much. He could make his legs go now, which he could keep under water usually, but when brought too near the surface made the water boil as if a geyser had come through. The way the water fumed and went into the air when his feet beat too near the surface must have frightened the fish. He fought the water desperately, too, with his arms, and his face showed agony.

Ben would come swimming near, noiseless and with no lost motion, like a sucker under the anchored rowboat about seven o'clock in the evening, and try to give Mr. Parker the idea that the kingdom of heaven is not taken by violence. After a while Mr. Parker caught on. Then he just saved out the movements that got him somewhere and forgot the others. He used his arms and legs just enough to keep him going and let himself down into the water until it wet the fringe of hair above his pink neck. Instead of appearing to try to see how much foam he could beat up he went quietly and pulled with his closed hands on the water, reaching out with his arms till his ribs felt it and swinging in great movements with his legs and feeling the pressure of the water on his shin bones. Pretty soon he was asking Ben if he knew how far a person could swim—what the record was.

Mr. Parker found a long stick under water and breaking it in two in the middle set stakes up in the lake fifty yards apart. The stakes

stood there while Mr. Parker was away and were there when he came back between trips later in the season. He became able to swim from one stake to the other. That was a proud moment. He left up the stakes as a reminder of his record.

Mr. Parker thought it would add to the pleasure of the family if they could have a log to perform with in the water. Ben and Paul found a trunk that would be just the thing. It was six feet long and about a foot in diameter, poplar, and peeled. The boys experimented with the log and discovered anew what Ben already knew, that a log is a treacherous thing in the water. A log rolls over in the water with surprising ease.

Mr. Parker was pleased to see the log, when he came down, and said he thought the women ought to know how to save themselves by clinging to objects in case they were forced to leave a sinking vessel.

“Wait till I get into my bathing suit and I’ll give them all a lesson,” he said joyously.

Ben and Paul were interested, especially Ben, who thought he knew something about how logs behave in water.

Mr. Parker came out in his bathing suit, which was now faded considerably, and called Mrs. Parker and Dorothy. He got into the boat and rowed out beyond the second stake. He would now give the exhibition that he had promised.

“This is a sinking steamer,” he called, pointing to the boat he was in, “and this is a log that comes floating by. I am a passenger that can’t swim. So I save myself by getting on this log.”

Mr. Parker then let himself down upon the log, sitting astride and holding to the rowboat.

“The steamer sinks,” he shouted, and gave the boat a push toward shore, “and I—
whoa——”

He never finished the lecture. As Ben had expected, but as no one else had, the log gave a quick turn and was instantly bobbing about on a troubled sea all by itself. Mr. Parker’s

bathing suit and his white legs seemed to be going in a circle for a moment and then the spray and foam of the water showed where he was. He spit out water and shook his head and tried to say something, and it was impossible not to sympathize with him.

“Who are you?” called out Dorothy, holding her sides, while every one else laughed and laughed.

“Did you miss the log?” asked Paul.

“Say, I’ve learned something about logs,” admitted Mr. Parker. “They can buck worse than an outlaw cow pony.”

“The center of gravity was too high,” said Paul, “and you rolled over with the log on top.”

“Rolled over, yes,” said Mr. Parker disgustedly.

“How would you do that?” Mr. Parker asked Ben.

“It was a great success as it was,” interrupted Dorothy. “It couldn’t have been funnier.”

“Don’t horn in,” was Mr. Parker’s way of settling Dorothy.

Ben said the way to keep afloat with a log was to sink yourself in the water and hold onto the log. The log would hold you up but you couldn’t ride a log, especially not a large man on a small log.

“I demonstrated that truth,” said Mr. Parker.

Mr. Parker insisted upon going out again to try the log.

“Here, you reptile,” he said, addressing the log and leading it out with him toward deep water beyond the second stake. “I’ll show you I know a log from a life-boat.”

Mr. Parker was wading out innocent of having an enemy in the world when an automobile stopped in front of the cottage. A man from the car motioned to Mr. Parker to come to shore. Mr. Parker came back, wondering what was wanted.

“You are under arrest,” the man said, showing a badge.

“What’s that you’re saying?” asked Mr. Parker. “Arrested? What for? Trying to commit suicide?”

“For having out nets,” said the fish warden, “against the law. There are the net stakes.”

“Run along,” said Mr. Parker. “I set those stakes for fifty yards. I can swim that far, and learned this season.”

“Then somebody’s been lying about you. They told me you were netting fish.”

“It’s a mistake, a cruel mistake,” declared Mr. Parker. “I may have sat on a fish or two when I went off that log, but that’s the extent of it.”

IX

A PICNIC SUPPER

WITH Mr. Parker at the cottage there was something going on all the time and one thing that promised much was a picnic supper. Mr. Parker had invited Otto Bergh, an insurance agent, to come down to the cottage and bring his wife and children, and Mrs. Parker had relatives who were invited. Ben was to be there as a friend of the Parker family, and Ben and Paul knew in advance of the two freezers of ice cream which was to be a feature of the picnic supper. Besides Ben and Paul, who were not mere children, fifteen youngsters, ranging from nursing bottle to more advanced stages of childhood, might have been counted on the beach at the height of the activities preceding and following the supper. Uncle Erickson furnished the ice and the cream and one of the freezers.

It was the first time Otto Bergh had been at this lake and he thought it a fine place. Mr. Parker took him around and pointed out things to see. Ben and Paul, the only boys of their size present, went in and out of groups and part of the time went with Mr. Parker and Otto Bergh as the former explained the advantages of having a cottage at Squaw Point. The women were busy getting out the dishes and setting the tables and doing things like that and the children fell partly in charge of the men. Both Mr. Parker and Otto Bergh presided at the swing while many of the children had their turns at the swing. The swing was a noble one, being suspended between two elms and having a pendulous movement that carried one on and on in a slow way until one could see away out over everything. The swing was so high that the motion was slow at first but when once in full operation it swung so high that on the return, Otto Bergh, who was more than six feet tall and as slim as a rail, had all he could do to get his hands on the seatboard

for another boost. Only the larger children were sent up high in the swing. The little ones would be swung gently and for them a short board would be used in place of the long board that fitted larger people. Otto Bergh was kindness itself; he gave everybody a swing. Ten times was the limit. Every child could be swung ten times and then it had to give way for the next. Paul told who was next and Otto Bergh saw that everything was all right and pushed off and kept the swing going. Some of the larger of the small children, boys especially, would run back and forth under the swing when it had some one in it and was in motion. Otto Bergh jerked his own boy, who did that once, and Paul hit a small boy cousin of his a severe clip on the side of the head for scooting under when the swing was in motion. Paul batted his cousin so hard for cutting up that other children of the same size who were not his relatives took notice and stopped running under.

When the ten swings were up Otto Bergh had

to stop the swing and empty out whoever was in it, for the swing would have gone forever; the old cat did not die very fast in this swing. The old cat had to be choked to death, Otto Bergh said; so he would run along by the side of the swing and slow it down and empty out the one in the swing. Some of the boys thought they would be smart, and jumped out when the swing was just about to return, but they sometimes fell on their noses and Otto Bergh forbade their jumping out. The two Bailey girls were there; they were relatives or something of the Parkers. They were twins and dressed exactly alike even to hair ribbons. They were thin and when they spoke as loud as they could it was not much above a whisper. Otto Bergh swung them halfway between the way he swung the babies, and the way he swung the boys, and they screamed, or squeaked, you might say.

“I’d like to show them something to be scared of,” said Ben, disgusted with the Bailey twins.

“I would too,” said Paul. “They always act that way.”

“Come on,” said Ben, “and we’ll do a thing or two.”

“There are too many children around to suit me,” said Paul. “Like a kindergarten.”

“I guess that is the trouble,” said Ben. “But we can do something to stir ’em up.”

When Paul and Ben had kept house at the cottage they had rigged up a trick pole, like the one Ben had at Uncle Erickson’s. This was the strong pole of a small ironwood tree which was wired up securely between two pines.

They began performing on the trick pole. Pretty soon the swing was empty and hung idly swaying, while all the children, the Bailey girls included, were watching the boys at the trick pole. Paul performed first, doing such things as skinning the cat and hanging by his legs. Ben did his best stunts and the children howled with delight. Otto Bergh, relieved of his labors at the swing, stood by, readjusting his belt and wiping the sweat from his brow and explaining

to Mr. Parker how much better sports shirts are than any other kind. He said that since he had got to wearing sports shirts he had not called for his collars at the laundry for more than three months.

Mr. Parker said he liked sports shirts, only he liked them with long sleeves; otherwise when he wore a coat the coat sleeves rasped his arms. Otto Bergh said that he was never troubled that way. Probably the reason was that his arms were only skin and bone while Mr. Parker's arms looked like something that could not all be packed in one place.

"Oh, the boys are drowning!" shrieked one of the Bailey twins.

After Ben and Paul had performed on the trick pole they had disappeared. They went down to the beach and sat on the sand behind a scrub oak tree and discussed what they would do next. They decided to go into the water.

The Bailey twins shrieked and pointed to where the boys were, away out in what seemed to be dangerously deep water. Uncle Erick-

son's boat was out there and was bottom side up and the boys seemed to be on the point of going down, perhaps for the last time. But they did not go down, and then it looked as if Paul was just about all gone—drowned—and Ben was bringing him in and having a hard time of it too. Ben's head could be seen down in the water to his ears and Paul had to be supported. It seemed from the shore that Ben could never get to shore with Paul, who was apparently exhausted.

The shrieks of the twins, for the other twin had joined in, and the excitement on the shore attracted the attention of the women, who were getting the picnic supper ready.

"Where are the men?" asked Mrs. Parker in alarm.

The men were nowhere to be found.

"Oh, the boys are going to get to shore," squeaked one of the twins. "They are coming. Ben is swimming and bringing in Paul."

"Aw, he's walking," remarked one of the onshore small boys.

"Squat down or you'll show above water," called another.

Then Ben laughed and Paul stood up.

"The boys are saved," the twins repeated.

"My knees ache," said Ben, "from squatting down so long."

"How deep was the water out there?" asked a boy.

"Over your head," said Ben.

"Honest to goodness?"

"Yes, if you put your head down," replied Ben.

The little children thought the big boys were wonderful, they were so wet, and went back to their play. Just then they were playing canning. They were filling empty olive bottles with rose hips and lake water, putting in enough sand from the beach to fill any spaces. Other children were going about decorated with necklaces of wild hop vines and still others were keeping house under the sun shed that had been put on the beach, consisting of four poles driven upright into the sand and support-

ing a roof of rough boards. This structure kept the sun off and being open at the sides could accommodate any number of children as they came and went.

The Bailey twins had been so excited about the "drowning" and the rescue that Ben and Paul disappeared again and nobody thought much of it. Soon the children were running to the cottage and calling for their mothers to come and see the tall men coming. There were two giants coming along the road behind the bushes and would soon be close up. The children would run up to the cottage and then run back as far as they dared toward the road, all the time yelling and screaming with excitement. The giants kept on coming though they stopped at times and talked in gruff tones to each other. The children, the smallest ones, thought the giants might be looking for somebody to eat. The twins giggled and ran back and forth for short distances. Presently the giants stopped in the road before the cottage.

"This is my brother," said one giant, reach-

ing up and placing his hand on the other giant's head.

"We're both giants," said the big brother, who had higher stilts than the other.

"Your legs are too long for your body," called out Otto Bergh's oldest boy, who had sandy hair and brown eyes.

"It's the boys," tee-heed a twin.

The giants went on and the children ran after them and threw things.

"They aren't anybody at all," one child said, "just the boys."

"What will those boys do next?" one twin asked the other and both danced up and down.

"What else can we do?" asked Paul when he and Ben were safe behind the bushes.

"I'd like some real excitement," said Ben.

"The twins wouldn't faint, anything we could do," thought Paul.

"If we made them faint the mothers would be scared to death at what made the twins faint and they might not like it," said Paul. "And there's the ice cream yet."

“Let’s try the pup,” said Ben.

Mr. Parker had put the pup behind the place where he kept his car; he said he didn’t want the pup worn out by the children. The pup was a collie with a white collar of hair about its neck and a stripe down its nose. It was round and so plump that its skin seemed about to crack and its nose and legs were shorter than they would be later. Now it looked like a small bear and waddled. Mr. Parker paid a dollar for the pup, but said that when he got him to town he could show him off and people would think the collie had cost twenty or twenty-five dollars. The white collar around the pup’s neck would make people think it was of pure blood; it was really seven-eighths pure blood. Mr. Parker wanted a good watchdog for Mrs. Parker and this collie was just the thing, and he did not wish to have the children play with the pup and wear it out. Mrs. Parker was glad to have a watchdog but could not see why Mr. Parker should wish to have people think that he had paid twenty or twenty-five dollars for

the pup when it had cost only a dollar. Mr. Parker said he could see why, but he did not explain. The boys felt sure that while Mr. Parker did not wish to have the pup played with, as a regular thing, he would not object to having the pup used in a pageant or something of that nature.

The boys were gone a long time now and the Bailey twins had great curiosity, for they were sure the boys would be up to something. At times the twins would get excited and go capering around in giggles just as if the boys had really appeared and were doing something for the children to marvel at, and then they would calm down again and with the other children talk about what the boys could possibly be doing. Then all forgot about the boys, for ice cream time was drawing near.

Ben and Paul were out in the woods fixing up the pup for his part in the "pageant." Paul had seen a pageant and knew how to get one up. The boys thought that a pageant that represented an early settler chased by a bear would

be about the best. The pup would be the bear, Paul the old settler and Ben master of ceremonies. At first they thought they would have the pup go on foot as a bear while it chased the old settler, but the pup could not be counted on to hold to its part. The pup was likely to fall down at a critical point in the action, roll over, bite a hind leg with his little white teeth and jump up and go reeling off the wrong way. The pup was too light-minded to take part in the pageant in any way except under strict control.

“If we trust this pup to chase you he’ll never get to where the Bailey twins are,” said Ben.

“Let’s put him on the express wagon,” suggested Paul.

So the boys loaded the pup on the express wagon and tied him down so he could not get off or fall off, no matter how fast the wagon went. They placed a block for his forefeet to stand on in order to make the pup seem bigger and to give him a fierce and wild appearance. Then the boys draped the express wagon with

wild hop vines. When this was done the wagon was not visible and the pup loomed up just that much larger and more dangerous. Ben said he would roar and bark, for the pup was not old enough to do more than whine-talk for its mother. When the pup was ready Paul made himself look like an early settler by getting into a burlap sack with holes cut for his arms and smearing his face with the juice of a little plant that bore a multitude of minute fruits in red clusters. The juice gave Paul's face the appearance of having been lacerated or of a hemorrhage. The old settler had been attacked by the bear and seriously wounded but was escaping—that was the idea. Ben would draw the express wagon and pup and yell and roar, and Paul would shout for help and run as fast as he could, staggering on account of loss of blood.

The women at the cottage had made the first table ready, which was the one for the children to eat at, to be followed later by the second table for the grown-ups. The children and the

Bailey twins were watching developments and getting their mouths ready for what was coming, and were not thinking at all about Ben and Paul. In the meantime Ben had the pageant all lined up behind a stump and bushes. When Ben said go, Paul was to spring out and plunge among the people and be scared out of his wits, pointing back toward the bear and calling for help. This would prepare everybody for the bear and Ben would come next followed by the beast.

The Bailey twins stood with their backs to the deep forest, and the little children were centering their attention on the first table when Ben punched Paul with a stick and said go.

Paul burst through the bushes, yelling and excited, with what seemed to be blood streaming from his face. He was so changed that he did not look like himself and probably that was one of the reasons why the twins were so scared; they had just got started on shrieks when the bear came into view, riding high and swaying as if hungry for settlers. Ben had

smearred his own face too with the red juice and as no one stopped to notice that he was drawing the express wagon, or that there was a wagon, the pageant was a great success. Everybody seemed to think that an animal had attacked the boys and cut up their faces. The pup leered and swung his heavy and calm countenance as the wagon brought him savagely toward the group of little folks and the Bailey twins, and the twins became wild and then hysterical. At first they shrieked but soon ran out of wind; they froze up in horror and then thawed out and fled and ran in circles. Ben and Paul were overjoyed when they saw the twins succumb, but pretty soon they worried because the twins did not act natural. Ben ran up to them, leaving the pup on the pageant dray, and, not realizing that his face was all "blood," took hold of a twin and shouted that it was nothing but a pup. Even this did not quiet the twin he caught and Paul was having just as hard a time getting the other twin to listen to him. They seemed un-

reasonable and shrieked and looked wild, not seeing anything as it was. At last the twins got control of themselves and darted toward the cottage, diving into the midst of the people there, and gasped.

“Better take the pup back,” thought Paul.

“And we’ll have to clean up; the ice cream is coming,” remarked Ben. “We better be around about now; it melts if you don’t eat it.”

“We scared the twins, all right,” said Paul.

“Wonder what they’d do if a real bear chased them,” said Ben. “If I was a bear I wouldn’t eat the twins if I could. One would taste just like the other,” he added.

The children and boys had two dishes of ice cream apiece and things to eat with it. After that some of the children asked for more, but this was not polite, but they were given a little; others just looked as if they wanted more and said nothing; these were given more. Ben and Paul, being large boys, had two helpings and then two more, and made the fourth one last as long as possible.

The older people came for the second table. Mr. Parker said that he hoped to have a big fish to bake but he hadn't got around to catch it yet; so Mrs. Parker had made the most wonderful salad and had sandwiches and coffee. There was nearly everything from a garden in the salad,—cucumbers, peas, lettuce, carrots and celery and more.

Bill Olson came driving by when the party was nearly to the ice cream. Otto Bergh, being an insurance agent, spoke to Bill and Bill's horse stopped at once and went to grazing.

“What are you doing, feeding your face?” was Bill's remark, addressed to Otto Bergh but meant for the company to hear.

“Give Bill some ice cream,” said Paul; “he's a good scout.”

Bill was delighted to be asked in. He sat on the porch with his back to the cottage wall, while Otto Bergh sat on the outer side of the porch with his back to the lake. Bill was happy, as any one would have been with such ice cream as Mrs. Parker could make. He

promised to take out Mr. Parker in a boat and show him exactly where to cast in for a fish big enough to bake for a large family.

“You might have to bake him one end at a time,” gaily predicted Bill, speaking of the fish that might be caught, “bake him one end at a time and let the other end rest on a chair.”

Mr. Parker said he had never caught a fish that looked too big to him; if he caught an extra size one he would have it photographed and take the photo back to town with him and have it framed.

Bill affected to be amazed at the way Otto Bergh “put away” ice cream. Every little while Bill would say that his view of the lake was being shut off, hinting that Otto Bergh was swelling out farther and farther. Everybody laughed at the joke the first time or two, so Bill kept it going. If Otto Bergh ate more than Bill Olson he deserved mention.

It was growing late in the afternoon and the smallest children were giving some trouble, being fussy. Otto Bergh had to carry the

Bergh baby around and keep her from howling. Some of the children had eaten too much ice cream.

“They’ll all be going home now,” Paul remarked to Ben.

“They’ll say good-by and stand around,” thought Ben.

“I guess I’ll skip now,” said Ben. “This is a good time for me to make my getaway.”

“Let’s go out in the woods,” said Paul. “Talking is what gets me.”

“Anyhow we can be bailing out Uncle Erickson’s boat and just have to wave from the lake,” proposed Ben.

X

THE MAN OF THE HOUSE

THE Parker cottage was a half mile from a neighbor's, but people were passing frequently, so the location did not seem lonely, not in the daytime anyhow; but nights it was a trifle different. When the shadows of evening fell it seemed more likely that the woods behind the cottage might conceal wild animals or bad men. If one were looking for things he could see shapes which closely resembled living creatures in the bushes and trees by which the cottage was surrounded. The woods looked so black at night, especially when the moon rose late or was not seen at all. On moonless nights there was a tendency for the family to draw inside the cottage and stay there, when Mr. Parker was away. When he was there his jovial talk and loud laughter made the woods seem different and free from danger.

When Mr. Parker went away the last time he told Paul to be the man about the house. If anything should happen that threatened danger to the family he said he was sure Paul would be on the job. Paul, who had come to have a keener eye and more independence since he first met Ben Long, assured his father that the cottage would be defended. Mrs. Parker had worried more after being at the cottage for several weeks than at first, for people told her the worst things that ever had happened in that region or ever could happen. Women of the neighborhood would bring in tales that made Mrs. Parker regret that all the sleeping accommodations were on the porch and that Paul was the only man there with Mr. Parker away. Paul did not know what he would do in case of emergency, for he had no idea of what the emergency might be, but he said he thought he could do what there was to do, but so far as he knew there was nothing for him to do, not yet.

If the Parkers had known about the Hern gang before building a cottage at Squaw Point

they would probably have built a cottage many miles away or even perhaps have given up the idea of living in the woods or country. But they had not heard of the Hern gang and so went gaily ahead with their camping-out plans. It was not until several weeks at Squaw Point had passed that Mrs. Parker picked up sufficient information about the Hern gang to make her dread to see the sun go down.

The Hern gang? Oh, they were not a bad crowd, except when drunk. There were two Hern brothers and one or two toughs that ran with the Herns. They were all right except when drunk, but they had an unfortunate disposition to get drunk whenever they could get whisky. One of the Herns was a jailbird, having served a term for attempting to carve up his brother with a long knife and partly succeeding. These amiable creatures, the Herns and associated toughs, were, however, all right when not drunk; it was embarrassing to women and children not to know when they were about to get drunk, so the women and children might

flee to a fortified place. After Mrs. Parker heard of the Herns she saw to it that the porch shades were all down and the screen door hooked tight every night, not very substantial protection, but there was a man about the house—Paul.

One Sunday, late in the afternoon, when Mrs. Parker and Dorothy and the children and some friends from another cottage were on the beach, a commotion was heard up the road. It was the Hern gang, and Mr. Parker was away! Their team came along, loosely guided by a drunken Hern. Two companions, leering and bawling, were also in the wagon, though not free from liability to pitch out at any time.

“Oh, that’s the Hern gang,” said one of the women, a visiting cottager from up the lake.

“Where are they going?” asked Mrs. Parker.

“They can’t get home this way,” replied the speaker. “They will be back pretty soon probably.”

Paul explained that the road ended at Squaw Point. There was only a footpath across from the road the HERNs were taking to the road that would take them home. They would either have to leave the team and go across on foot or come back with the team, passing again in front of the Parker cottage, and it was growing late. The HERNs had not stopped at the cottage going down, but they might coming back; it was their habit to go to houses and demand something to eat, or call for matches, while the women would flee.

The HERNs disappeared down the road yelling and cursing. They drove in at Uncle Erickson's, but finding no one at home, came out and went farther along, passing out of sight behind the second growth of timber that grew beside the road. When out of sight their bawling could be heard. The observers on the Parker beach could imagine the HERNs reeling to the doors of houses farther along the road, calling for coffee and frightening people.

The little party in front of the Parker cottage

strained their eyes and ears to detect the return of the Herns. But they did not come into view. The two women, who had walked to the Parkers', dared not set out on foot while there was uncertainty as to where the Herns would be, so they borrowed a boat from the Parker beach and as darkness fell pulled away, keeping rather close to shore, for the lake was rough, and keeping rather far out, for safety from the Herns. Mrs. Parker and Dorothy looked with a sickening sense of helplessness upon the boat as it pulled away and then they watched for the Herns to come back. It was growing so late that the Parkers thought the gang must have left the team and gone across to the other road on foot, and they began to breathe easier. Their relief was short-lived; the Herns were coming. The team was coming, so the Herns would soon be gone. But there was only one man in the wagon. Where were the others? The Parkers watched, from within the cottage, the lone Hern drive by, with his ugly face and greasy hat. Maybe the other two had taken

the footpath between the roads and gone home—maybe. Mrs. Parker declared the wagon had stopped in the woods not far below the cottage.

“Probably the other two were so drunk they fell out of the wagon and this one tried to get them back in, but couldn’t,” suggested Dorothy.

Mrs. Parker’s face grew white.

“The man in the wagon wouldn’t leave the others by the road, would he?” asked Mrs. Parker in consternation.

“Wouldn’t he?” said Paul. “How could he do anything else? They fell out, and he was too drunk to get them back into the wagon.”

Instead of being happy because of the HERNs leaving, the Parkers now feared there were two of them lurking near and might be around all night,—not a pleasant foreboding. But no one knew just what had become of the two who were missing. It was just a theory that the drunks were within a short distance of the cottage, with darkness coming on and not a neighbor within a half mile. There was a chance that they had gone home across fields on foot, per-

haps after quarreling with the man who drove the wagon.

The Parkers were going to bed as usual—not quite as usual either, for there was a horrible dread. Paul's little sister wished to know if bullets would go through the screens and through porch shades and through khaki, there being a hammock of that material. No lights were used, and there was a silence about the cottage that was depressing. The older Parkers did not go to bed until late and had just lain down when there came a knock at the screen door. Mrs. Parker, at first frightened, somehow felt that it was Mr. Erickson and so it was. Uncle Erickson stepped upon the porch and said he thought he ought to tell them that there were two drunks, one of them the Hern jailbird, lying right by the road about seventy yards below the Parker cottage.

“I was coming home just now,” explained Uncle Erickson, “and my wagon wheel passed within six inches of something by the road and my horse jumped. I thought it might be some-

body, so I drove down to my place and put up my horse and left my wife and came back to see. It's the Herns, two of them, drunk as lords; but they'll come to before morning. When I came along with my lantern, one of them, the jailbird, riz up a little and clutched me and reached for his hip pocket to get a gun, I guess. I smashed his arms down and he went to sleep again. But they'll come to and be going by before morning."

"Oh, Mr. Erickson, won't you stay here till morning? Protect us."

"Wisht I could," said Uncle Erickson. "But my old woman is scared to death and I can't leave her. She's sure afraid of the Herns."

"But there's Ben. Ben would protect Mrs. Erickson."

"Ben's away from home," said Uncle Erickson.

"Well, I must be going," continued Uncle Erickson. "I'm going back next to the water and let the Herns have the road. I just wanted

to let you know, Mrs. Parker; thought you might be interested."

"Can't you do something for us?" beseeched Mrs. Parker, terrified beyond measure.

"If I only had some ammunition for my gun," replied Uncle Erickson. "I wisht I had some cartridges, but I shot 'em all up last winter. They cost like sin now, five cents every time you pull the trigger. Don't have a cartridge left. My rifle is sure death and if I had some ammunition you could borrow gun and all and make a sieve of any Hern that showed up. They don't carry anything to compare with that rifle of mine; it's a bird. But I don't have a pinch of ammunition. Some of them pistols will get into action a little sooner than a rifle but give me a rifle. Of course, if they sneak along and feeling ugly-like put a few bullets through the cottage just by way of conversation there ain't much left for you to do except dodge."

"Oh, they wouldn't do that," said Mrs. Parker, desperate.

“Well, probably not,” replied Uncle Erickson. “It’s more likely that they’d wake up cold and wet in this heavy dew and fog and think first of getting some coffee. Then they might come here, this being the first house they’d pass, going home by the road, and call for you to get up and make some hot coffee. You’d better make ’em the coffee. They’re all right except when they’re drunk or just getting over it; then they’re the devil’s own. The bootleggers that sell them liquor ought to be sent over the road for a term of years. I don’t have any respect for a man that makes his money by bringing booze into dry territory, and there’s lots of ’em doing it.”

And Uncle Erickson disappeared in the night.

Mrs. Parker took hold of Paul to keep from collapsing on the floor. “The children, the children,” she moaned.

Paul tried to say something.

“We must get away from here, now, now, now, before they wake up,” said Mrs. Parker to Paul, speaking a few words and then panting

and speaking some more. "Get out the car and take us all to town, quick, before they wake up, Paul."

She sank upon the hammock and could barely hold up under the shock of Uncle Erickson's report. She looked at Paul, and Paul, who had not yet really said anything at all, looked at his mother.

Finally Paul spoke.

"We live here," he said.

"What do you mean?" his mother asked.

"I mean we are not going to run," answered Paul. "We live here and we're going to stay, by——" and here Paul used an expression that his mother forgave.

"We must go to town and go to a hotel for the night," Mrs. Parker urged.

"Do you want me to be a coward?" asked Paul.

"We'll stay, but oh, Paul," was his mother's half-spoken and half-shuddered reply.

Mrs. Parker made up her mind to put the two little children under the cots in case the

Herns came; she would pull down the mattresses to protect them in case bullets should fly. The only cot in range of the one screen door was Paul's. Paul and Mr. Parker had always had their cots behind a hammock that hung across the porch midway back from the door. The rest of the family slept around the corner of the porch.

Paul and Mrs. Parker moved about noiselessly, following the example of Uncle Erickson, who had talked in low tones and stolen away quietly after having indicated by pointing his finger and jerking his head the exact place in the bushes where the two men were lying. No unnecessary sounds were made as Paul moved the porch seat across the doorway and placed upon the seat the wood box filled with firewood gathered from the woods, which were now a solid mass of terrors. He thought that by placing the filled wood box on the porch seat any one breaking through the screen door would topple the wood off the seat and perhaps fall into it and likewise collide with the porch

seat and get mixed up generally. This would wake up every one and give Paul a chance to get in his work of defense, using the auto spade.

The spade was a short implement of heavy high-grade steel with a detachable handle, capable of splicing the top of a man's head off if wielded with sufficient power. Paul took hold of the spade and "hefted" it and made motions with it as if laying out a Hern. He was undecided whether to use the cutting edge of the side of the blade and slice off the top of a Hern's head, or strike with the back of the blade and stun the man or possibly cave in his skull without drawing blood. Mrs. Parker saw Paul practising the movements with the spade and while not an expert in mechanics knew some things by intuition.

"You couldn't do anything with the spade, Paul," she said. "They would knock it out of your hands the first thing. You are not strong enough."

"He'd be sprawled out on the wood," argued Paul. "He'd fall over the wood and make a

racket, and I'd rush out with the spade and smash at him. I could cave his skull in with this spade. Or maybe he'll come up with his face to the porch screening; then I'll swing sideways with the blade; it would cut right through the screen and slice his face off."

"Don't you try to use the spade," his mother begged. "There are two of them and you are a mere boy."

"But Father said I was to be the man of the house," replied Paul, with set face, still feeling the weight of the spade and getting the swing of it.

"Take the revolver and shoot," Mrs. Parker demanded. "You have a right to keep any one from breaking in; they might frighten the children to death or do some awful thing. Take the revolver and if they come shoot, shoot."

"I'd like to try the spade on one of them," argued Paul. "If I could get a good swing with the spade I believe I could do one up."

"Don't trust the spade at all," said Mrs. Parker. "Have the spade nearby if you will,

but take your father's revolver and shoot if you have to, but don't get hurt yourself. Here," exclaimed Mrs. Parker suddenly, "you go back with the children, and give me the revolver. I'm afraid you will be hurt."

"I'll keep the revolver," said Paul, "and use it."

Mrs. Parker went back to her cot, and Paul set the spade beside his cot, leaning the spade handle against the wooden rod at his head. The revolver, a heavy weapon that would stop a bull, he laid on the floor about three feet from the side of the cot, so that when he turned to get up his right hand would come down on the spot where it lay. He planned to get out of bed by rolling over, thus keeping his body below the khaki hammock, upon which he had placed pillows on a line with his head when in a sleeping position. Paul made up his mind to keep quiet until an attempt was made at the screen door. Then he would roll out and keeping his body out of sight so as not to afford a target, fire from behind the end of the ham-

mock. There would be no light on the porch and he would be able to shoot with greater accuracy than would a man just getting over a drunk who came to a cottage without knowing its arrangements or where the family was sleeping. Paul practised pointing the revolver after Mrs. Parker had retired, but not to sleep, and felt sure that he could make the first shot effective should a man come to the screen door. For the second shot he would slide across the space between the end of the hammock and the porch side. If they returned his fire they would shoot at where his shot had been fired from, and in the meantime, before the flash got out of their eyes, he would have slid across the open space and raked the doorway with some more balls. He had six shots in the revolver and more cartridges in the pocket of his night-shirt. Having been drunk they would not shoot straight and they would not know where to shoot, and probably his own first shot would make them skip out. Suppose they did hit him; they might not kill him and a wound would heal

up. Besides, he would rather be shot and killed and laid out in a coffin and have flowers, with his mother crying, and have Ben Long come along and look at the dead face and say to himself that Paul had grit, than to sneak the family away from the cottage in a car, away from two drunken low-brows, who this moment were—maybe—just getting their evil minds awake and plotting to shoot up the cottage that that smart city guy, Parker, had built at Squaw Point, where they had slept off so many drunks and got hot coffee afterwards from people who did not dare refuse it. Ben Long wouldn't run, thought Paul; he'd stay and take his medicine; Ben had philosophy. They may hit me, thought Paul, but then I may hit them. Let them be afraid of him.

Paul tried to sleep but he heard many sounds. The prepared roofing would snap or do something, on account of changing temperature, and Paul would be on pins and needles. He lay as if the cot did not support him, his own tense muscles refusing to let go. Every little while

there would be a sound and Paul would start. Then he would partly fall asleep only to find himself jerked into full consciousness by a sound. Once there was a noise that brought a whisper from across the cots. Mrs. Parker was sure some one was at the door. Paul stage-whispered that it was nothing. Then he assured himself it was only the scratching of a pine twig against the screen as the wind began to move the trees gently. The night had been still and foggy and it was a relief to have the wind come after such stillness. The light of dawn began to steal among the trees, and no visitors yet. Paul went to sleep for longer periods, but would wake from a dream and then think Hens and feel for the revolver and drop off to sleep again.

Mrs. Parker did not sleep, not to speak of. She was afraid for Paul, and then the two little children, one a baby. It was due to her sleeplessness and fear that the family felt that a long breath was allowable when day came. She had seen two shadows on the screen as day

dawned, shadows which she took to be those of the two men stealing away quietly. This explanation was a comfort; to be sure, the sun rose on the other side of the cottage and could not have cast a shadow on the screen of an object on the west side of the cottage, and there was no moon, certainly none so powerful as to cast shadows that would prevail against the rising sun, but it was a comfort to the family to have the explanation, which served as an early morning stimulant until Paul went near where the men had been and discovered no one was there, finding the places in the grass and earth where the drunks had lain like logs. But the men were gone and never did the sun and day seem more welcome and wholesome. The mist that the sun caused to vanish in the bay this side of Squaw Point was something which the fear mist on the porch resembled in dispersion. What relief to know the men were gone!

Yet Paul did not feel quite like the others. As the night drew on and he had been startled

into expectancy of a conflict and no one came, he began to realize a strange revolution in his feelings. At first he had not exactly desired to have the HERNs attack the cottage, not exactly. But as the night passed and no HERN showed up, Paul began to feel differently. The spade was ready and he had pointed the revolver and pictured the slaughter so many times before daybreak that he suddenly became aware that what was troubling him was disappointment. He was disappointed because they had not come! He was amazed at himself, but that was the way he felt. He knew his mother would not understand it, but he was disappointed.

But the HERN gang was still at large, and Paul slept in the end cot and kept the spade leaning on the wooden rod at his head and laid the big revolver three feet from the side of the cot night after night while Mr. Parker was away. The HERNs came not but the fear of them remained. Paul's little sister feared they would come again but took heart from the spade and revolver; she believed Paul meant to kill

them with the revolver and bury them with the spade, and her little heart was comforted.

When Mr. Parker came back Mrs. Parker took him aside and she may have told him about Paul, for when she and Mr. Parker came near where Paul was they seemed to be gazing his way mostly and Mr. Parker had a look in his eyes. He put his hand on Paul's head and said that a boy had become a man, he guessed, and when Ben Long heard about the way Paul stood up when the Herts came, he told Paul that that was just what he, Ben, had expected.

"But I was scared to death and the Herts did not attack the cottage," expostulated Paul. "I didn't do a thing."

"Yes, you did," asserted Ben. "You made up your mind and that's what counts." But then Ben had philosophy, only he would not have known it by that name.

And the best news the Parkers had was when they learned that the deputy sheriff had "pinched" the jailbird Hert, who would go to the penitentiary for another offense, and

that the bootleggers, whom Uncle Erickson so much despised, were being dealt with under the law.

“I wouldn’t have the revolver by the cot,” Mrs. Parker said to Paul, late in the season; “somebody might step on it and make it go off.”

“Just as you say,” said Paul.

XI

THE COONS

WHEN Ben and Paul were on a berry-picking trip they came across an old basswood tree that had been felled. Ben said "coons."

"How did they catch them?" asked Paul.

"Plugged the hole at the top of the tree and then chopped down the basswood and caught them when they came out. They live in hollow trees," explained Ben. "Ever see coons?"

Paul said he had never seen a coon in all his life.

"Maybe you never saw a coyote," asked Ben. "There are quite a few of them, wolves we call them, around in these woods in the winter. If there's a dead horse or animal the coyotes will come for a meal and you can set traps and get them that way. But dogs get into the traps too. We have had two or three

dogs crippled up by being caught in wolf traps in the winter and frozen. We had to shoot the dogs. Swede, our dog now, is foxy and keeps away from the traps; anyhow he's never got caught yet. Maybe it's just his good luck."

"Who's got the coons?" asked Paul.

"They're up at Old Man Westby's now," replied Ben. "Two old ones and three young ones."

So the boys visited Old Man Westby to see the coons.

"I had to get them or be eaten out of house and home," explained Westby. "They found my sweet corn and the way they consumed it was a shame; paid no attention to food regulations or rules for substitutes. They seemed to be working against the Allies and so we organized and went and took them."

"How did you know where to find them?" asked Paul.

"The dog," said Westby. "He spotted them. Smelled them out, and when he saw the little fellows we knew the old coons were not far

away. When we were sure they were all at home we plugged the tree and cut it down and nabbed them as they came out at the base. I've captured any number of coons for the skins; have a coonskin coat that I wouldn't part with, warmest kind of a coat."

"I should think you would keep these for pets," said Paul.

"They are comical," said Westby. "Funny as the dickens. Here, General," said Westby, and pulled out the father coon by the chain, "stand up and let us look at you."

Westby had one of the children bring a dish of milk, which was put in the inclosure where mother coon and the three little ones were confined. The little coons, with their bright eyes and sharp noses, which looked as if they had been given a coat of liquid shoe blacking, for brightness and color, rushed up and began to take milk from the pan. Mother coon, however, seemed to think the youngsters should wait for the second table and she cuffed them away unmercifully and ate the milk herself, which she

did by reaching in a paw with the toes spread out and bringing it back to her mouth with the toes held together. Then she licked or drank from the inner surface of her paw and repeated the operation with speed and earnestness. The little ones were treated less severely later but at no time was there anything like politeness.

“Are they good to eat?” inquired Paul.

“Yes, but it’s like eating one of your own family,” said Westby.

“Never’ll forget the times we used to have chasing coons the year Neff the lawyer had a tent pitched out here by the lake. He was a sure-enough sportsman. He liked the Point. The first time I ever saw him he was in a boat off the Point fishing. I was fishing too. He said, ‘Do you live here?’ I said no, that I lived on the land. He said that was what he meant to ask. He put up a tent and we were the best of friends.”

“Where is he now?” inquired Ben.

“Oh, gone away, out west in North Dakota,

but he's coming back. One time when he was away from his tent somebody broke into it and took a few things. He found some of his fishing tackle on the beach and his sweater was tied to a tree. It was boys that did it. When he came back he wanted me to take my gun and shoot at anybody who molested his tent in his absence. 'Do you think this is a battle front?' I asked him. I told him shooting was pretty serious business. I asked him if he wanted me to spend the rest of my days behind prison bars. Everybody knows there's not much of value in a tent or summer cottage, and it would scarcely be worth while to kill a person to keep him out. It would be mostly boys who would try to get into a summer residence or put soap suds in the pump, and why kill for such a trifling act?"

"Would you shoot a man for stealing?" asked Ben.

"Yes and no," replied Old Man Westby. "It would depend on what he was stealing and the general circumstances. If he was stealing

something that would deprive my family of necessary things and cause them to starve or freeze to death I believe I would be justified in shooting. But if a thief was making a raid on a hen roost I might shoot but I would aim high."

"Things are safe down here, aren't they?" asked Paul. "We are going to leave cots and things at the cottage."

"Nobody's going to steal the cottage," replied Westby reassuringly. "That's too large to be concealed about one's person. How far is your pump in the ground?"

Paul said they drove the pipe down twelve feet.

"They won't take that either," continued Westby. "But as for other things I could not say. They might or they might not. There's lawless characters in every community, folks that would do things if they had a chance, but the snow will get so deep around your cottage that you need have little fear. I'd be more afraid that schoolboys would be going

by and would try to be smart, but the boys of this neighborhood are good boys, tiptop boys.

“You asked me if I ever had anything taken. Yes, I have. Some years ago a thief got into my log granary and took grain in the fall of the year. He took from several farmers in this neighborhood the same night. I heard our dog growl but thought nothing of it. The next morning the neighbors began to stir and they asked me if I had had anything stolen. ‘No,’ said I. Then I began to look around and I discovered that a thief had come. My log granary door had been forced open and grain had been taken, together with sacks. And it was my sacks that convicted the thief. We tracked that thief by the grain that spilled out of his rig and by the print of his horse’s hoofs in the earth. We had him arrested and brought into court. We took from him sacks, which he had cut the owners’ names out of. But some of the sacks had been mended by patches and could be identified. My wife swore that she had

put the patches on certain sacks and they could not shake her testimony. So they sent the thief to jail and we recovered most of the stolen property."

"How did she know she put on the patches?" inquired Ben, who, it must be said, often suffered long from lack of needle and thread.

"That she knew," explained Westby, "by the kind of stitches used. I don't just know the peculiarities of the sewing but my wife never wavered. She put the patches on and she knew she had. The prisoner saw it was all up with him when she left the witness stand."

"I suppose you fixed up the granary so nobody could get in next time," suggested Paul.

"It was all right as it was," contended Westby, "the granary itself; it was just the failure to provide a suitable lock for the door. The one that was on the door was a mere makeshift. The granary itself is a work of art. It was built by men from the old country at a dollar a round. It was built by Finlanders out of pine logs. The logs are dove-tailed at the

joints and so fitted together that not a kernel of grain can escape. It was built two stories and a half high and not a brace used in the entire construction. Right there it stands," said Westby, pointing; "it's getting old now but it's a valuable building to-day."

"Wouldn't some other kind of logs do just as well as pine?" asked Ben.

"Pine or begilyan," answered Westby. "These don't check."

"I suppose you will live here always," said Ben.

"No man can tell where he will spend the rest of his days," said Westby. "It is just the same with a man of my years as it is with you two boys. You have a longer period ahead of you, although you never can be sure, but there is uncertainty in either case. I expect to live right here under Squaw Point for quite a spell yet, if these summer people don't buy me out, which I hope I can resist. They come after me, from Dakota and Chicago, to buy me out."

"Wouldn't you sell?" asked Paul.

“For my price,” said Westby, tapping the ground with his cane and looking far away. “There’s no better place to live. The air is such that one wakes refreshed from slumber, no malaria. The little lake belongs to this property and can be drained. All that is necessary to drain it is to deepen the Kiel Canal,” mentioned with humor, “which flows from the little lake into the big lake. Lower the bed of that stream and the small lake would dry up and the land that’s left would be valuable. I am not undertaking any of these improvements myself, but they will be made in time; if not in my time, later.”

“You must have seen many things down here where you have lived so long,” suggested Paul.

“It’s been good times and poor times,” said Westby. “I’ve seen many things in my day. The big fire swept through here and burned everything. Most of the trees you see are scarred on one side. The fire raged for days and we fled to high ground or where the flames could not reach us. The fires burned the very

soil and smoldered for weeks. We cut trenches in the earth to stop their spread. The wild animals came out of the forest but showed no fear. A friend of mine told me how when he was getting away from the front a big black bear came rolling along by his side with his mouth open and his tongue hanging out, but he did not attack; he was too much taken up with his own troubles to look for a fight. Scores of people farther east lost their lives and the smoke poured over the country from the path of the fires. But you should have seen the corn crop the next season. In places it grew twenty feet high, such corn as was never seen before or since."

"There have been good times and poor times," repeated Paul.

"Good times and poor times," replied Old Man Westby, throwing an ear of sweet corn to the old father coon, who took it in his paws as if they were hands. "We got caught one winter without feed for the stock. Straw there was none and the hay was gone. I went out

on the ice on the big lake and cut some reeds for bedding the stock. I saw the cattle eat this, so I went out with a mower and wheel rake and began to cut the reeds and wild rice that grew in the lake and stood above the ice. Other people were in the same fix that I was and they came with mowing-machines and wheel rakes and hay rigs. I counted twenty-one teams on the ice at one time, getting hay, you might call it. The reeds are sweetish inside and the cows ate them and the wild rice makes pretty good hay. The ducks like it. You can see them come along and strip a head of wild rice with their bills. They will give one motion with their bills and sweep out the kernels from a head. Cold? We went after hay on the ice when it was forty below. We would hang a horse blanket inside of the hayrack at the rear end of the sleigh when we were facing the wind, to keep from freezing, and we would walk behind."

"The lake must be a pretty cold place in the winter time," said Paul.

“The wind sweeps it,” said Westby, “and the snow blizzards are something fierce. But I made a valuable acquaintance, if I can say I am really acquainted with him yet, out on the ice.”

“Who was that?” asked Ben, who thought he knew everybody around Squaw Point.

“The Hermit,” said Westby. “I met the Hermit at a little skating party on the ice. That was before he came to live here. The accident hadn’t happened to his wife then, or maybe it had. But the Hermit, boys, the Hermit, has the stuff when it comes to nerve. Make no mistake about that. That’s why I like the Hermit—I know him. He has his own ideas and lives the way he thinks best. He’s full of learning, the Hermit. I shouldn’t be surprised to find out that he had been on Squaw Point getting facts together about the heavens for the government, with that telescope he’s so fond of. He has his own ideas and keeps a lot of them to himself.”

“You met him on the ice?” this from Paul.

“He was younger, though it was not so many years ago, and I was a good deal of a fool. If I hadn’t been I never would have ventured out with a sled in such poor repair. I had a one-horse cutter with a broken runner. This I had tied up with a heavy cord, but the cord was placed beneath the runner and took the wear. I was in town and expected to have a smith fix the runner, but I got into conversation and neglected the matter until it was past time. I might have had sense enough to run the cord in a new place, but I hadn’t. So I set out for home across the ice. It was getting dark but there would be a moon later. I had never thought of danger and had no gun. I knew there were wolves too, not merely these little coyotes, but the regular old timber wolves. They had not been cleared out of the big swamp at that time. The winter had been severe and they got pretty hungry, and I figure that they had had a taste of blood that day and were looking for more. Anyhow, when I got out on the ice I began to hear the critters. You hear

them once and you will remember their noise. I spoke to the horse and she moved along a little faster. Just then it occurred to me that my runner was not in good condition. If I could keep going the wolves probably would not get to me until I was so near Squaw Point that I could get in without harm, but if the runner should give me trouble they might come too close for comfort. So I studied on the runner. I knew what would happen if the string wore through and I shouldn't get out and fix it. The rear portion of the runner would swing around sideways and catch in the snow and maybe tip me out if we came to an obstruction. Most of the lake was free from snow, but on the side farthest from town there was much snow and it was here that I would need to move along pretty spry if anywhere.

“Well, I was riding along, as a man will, thinking more about what the runner was liable to do than about where the wolves were when, Jerusalem! they yelled so near they surprised me. I wasn't halfway across the ice

yet and I could feel that the runner was out of place and beginning to drag and catch. I better fix the runner the first thing, I thought to myself, and jumped out to do a quick job. I dropped the reins when I jumped out and was kicking the broken runner into place when the wolves yelled again, closer up. This scared the mare so she must have jumped ten feet, and she kept going. I ran after her and called to her to stop, but she must have thought it was more wolves and she lit out. There I was with a stretch of ice between me and the shore toward town on one side and more ice and snow banks and a runaway horse and Squaw Point on the other side. You will excuse me if I was undecided. The wolves were swinging along on the ice back of me and Squaw Point looked good to me, but so far away. My state of mind was not relieved much when the brutes let out another howl in concert that seemed to express considerable satisfaction. I had a pocket knife and I turned toward Squaw Point. I would be offering them a square meal if I took the back



"I HEARD A SHOT"

track, while I might, if I ran fast enough, get to the home side. I threw my buffalo coat away, as far as I could heave it on the ice, thinking to distract their attention and get a minute extra. Then I began to imitate the bay mare in making tracks for this side of the lake.

“I heard a shot and was heartsick that anybody should be wasting ammunition when I needed it so much. I was going as fast as a man can on ice; if you hurry too much you lose out. If I could get to where there was more snow on the ice my feet would not slip so much and I might get away from the wolves and by this time I could hear their toenails scratch on the ice, or I thought I could. Then I heard another shot and the thought came into my head that it might be somebody shooting at the wolves. I don't know why I didn't have sense enough to think of that the first shot. I was thinking of Squaw Point, I guess. I looked back, and, suffering snakes! there was a man on skates wading right into the wolves and skating circles around them and handing out

lead. The nerve of it! I stopped on the ice right where I was and could see enough of what was going on to convince me that my wife would see me again. The man on skates didn't do a thing to that pack. I asked him afterwards if he got every shot. He said that if he missed any he wasn't aware of it. There was blood on the snow where the survivors made their getaway and there were five dead ones, which would account for six shots. But what struck me was the way he seemed to enjoy the row. He didn't know I was within forty miles of the place. I could not flatter myself that he was trying to save me, for he wasn't. The man was a good skater—you ought to see the Hermit skate, just the way he came home with dinnymite—and he had come out for a scrap with timber wolves!”

“The Hermit do that?” asked Ben with his eyes wide open. “I never heard of that; he never told us.”

“And he wouldn't in a thousand years, and he most likely wouldn't like to have me tell it,

and I don't talk about him often. He's the Hermit to us and that's enough," and Old Man Westby threw another ear of sweet corn to the old coon and looked at the boys with a steady look that seemed to go back and back over his lifetime.

XII

PARTRIDGES

As the fall days drew near with their tang and color, Ben and Paul spent many hours ranging the shores of the lake and going about in the woods that clothed the crest and slopes of Squaw Point. The boys would frequently run upon partridges and be startled as these whirred away among the bushes, sometimes one by one, until all had escaped. The hunting season would open soon, but the boys were not so much interested in shooting as in seeing things. Paul thought he would like to eat partridge sometime; Ben told him the meat was white and not like the dark meat of the prairie chicken, about which Paul knew. Ben said that partridges were like prairie chickens on the outside, but on the inside were more like regular chickens, such as stood around the pump for water in Uncle Erickson's dooryard.

The paths that led through the woods were never more alluring. The carpet of brown pine needles, the gorgeous red of the sumac, the waning and yellowing foliage of the bushes and shrubs that had stood all summer overshadowed by trees, the crisp and almost frosty mornings, the lake, blue and placid or gray and riotous with foam, the sound of the threshing machines on nearby farms, the first arrivals of ducks on their way southward, and the water of the bays and near shore over which hovered wraiths of mist to be dispelled when the laggard sun reached unlighted places,—all this cast a spell upon the two boys.

One morning they were going over the Point when they heard singing. The air was so still one might hear sound a long way off. It was a man's voice, not over-loud but beautiful, and there was something about it that made one think the singer must have known the best music.

“That's the Hermit,” said Ben. “He's a great one to sing, sometimes. He doesn't sing like any one else I ever heard.”

“Sounds like a man, a tenor, I heard once when I went to church with my uncle in Chicago,” said Paul. “He came out and sang a solo in church. Say, he could sing.”

“The Hermit’s sung somewhere, maybe it was Chicago,” said Ben. “They say he used to sing in public. I guess he could.”

The Hermit stood in an open space among the trees, where the wild roses had starred the woods with red in June and where now their bushes stood with frayed and rusty foliage but glowing with brilliant scarlet hips. In his hand he held a branch heavy with splendid hips, and he seemed to be singing rather absent-mindedly, and so beautifully that the boys stood back and just held their mouths open.

In the time of roses,
Hope, thou weary heart:
Spring a balm discloses
For the keenest smart.

Though thy grief o’ercome thee
Through the winter’s gloom,
Thou shalt cast it from thee
When the roses bloom.

“If I could sing like that I wouldn’t have pigs around,” was Ben’s comment, “and I’d live where people could hear me sing.” And he relaxed a face that had been set in attention and Paul snuffled, for the exquisitely modulated voice had moved the boys in a way they little understood.

“Do you want to see something wonderful?” asked the Hermit.

The boys said they did.

“It isn’t the rose bushes,” continued the Hermit. “They are wonderful too, the red hips.”

“They look as if they had been shellacked,” thought Ben.

“The rose hips are as beautiful to me,” said the Hermit, “as the roses themselves. The roses come in the spring; the hips are the roses of fall—and roses are welcome then. But there’s something for you to see.”

The boys followed the Hermit to a spruce tree that stood with the sunlight just beginning to light it up.

“What is it?” asked Paul.

“Can’t you see?” said the Hermit.

“Spiders’ webs,” said Ben.

The dew and mist were still upon the spiders’ webs which were suspended from the spruce branches, making the graceful tree stand veiled and shimmering as the light stole through the poplars by which it was surrounded. Webs large and webs small, spun miraculously on an August night, decked the spruce tree to its top. The dense foliage of the lower branches of the spruce, where the boys and the Hermit could see closely every curious thread of the spiders’ aerial engineering, was hung so thickly with the cloud-like filaments that one might wonder where all the spiders came from to weave by moonlight such dainty patterns, even to imprison the moonlight, one might say, for the spruce tree looked as if it had been filled with moonlight which had all gone away except the spiders’ webs.

The Hermit went around the tree gazing, gazing. “Beautiful,” he exclaimed.

When the boys went on again, the Hermit was still there, admiring the webs on the spruce tree. Ben and Paul found more things to admire after they had been with the Hermit on a walk, or run across him in the woods, as they had that morning.

Soon after the vision of the spruce tree there was packing up at the Parker cottage and Ben and Paul saw less of each other. Paul was going to enter high school and Ben, well, Ben was thinking. He was also going fishing now and then and it was on one of his last fishing trips, before he should leave to stay with another uncle and do chores for his board and room while he went to the town school, that he wished Paul had not left so soon and could have been in the old boat with him.

In the middle of a hazy afternoon Ben had taken Uncle Erickson's boat around the Point to where pike had been caught a week before by men from town. If they could catch pike in that place he could, if the pike had not moved.

He was baiting his hook with a minnow, one of a canful which he had taken with a net at the mouth of Toad River, when he heard a gun go off on the Point.

“It’s somebody rushing the hunting season,” said Ben, talking to himself and standing up in the boat with his eyes on the woods. “They’re after partridges.”

Ben caught pickerel and bass and a pike or two, but the big fish, the enormous fish, which he hoped to catch before he went away, did not get hooked that day. It was growing late and there were signs of a storm and Ben took the oars, with a troll line out, and started back around the Point for home.

“I don’t believe big fish will take a hook,” Ben was thinking. “You can get them through the ice with a spear but they are too wise or lazy to bite on a minnow or a frog or pork or bacon or artificial bait. I’d just like to get a fish sometime that would make people stare, oh, say fifty pounds, if they are that size any more.”

Ben was hurrying to keep from getting wet in the coming rain. The water was rough and would be rougher around the Point.

“What ails that dog?” thought Ben as he heard a dog’s sharp barking near the high bluff ahead. “It’s the Hermit’s dog,” he decided. “He’s treed a coon or got something cornered. But he doesn’t sound natural; I wonder what’s up.”

Ben rowed close to the foot of the bluff to satisfy his curiosity. If he rowed too close he would bump the rocks, for the wind was rising and it was always rough around the Point when it was rough anywhere on the lake. The dog was on the bluff, running about wildly and yelping and making a fuss. Ben could not make out what ailed the dog. It was a queer place for the dog to be; no woodchuck holes there. The dog made more fuss when the boat came along and Ben looked up to where the dog was and rowed slowly, undecided whether or not to pull the boat up on the stones and scout or keep going. Intent on the dog Ben got close in with

the flat-bottomed boat, which would swing about like a dishpan anyhow, in rough water, and found himself almost upon a man's form, lying partly in the water.

"He's dead and I can't do any good," gasped Ben, who did not relish the company of a dead man, especially when it was nearly dark and the wind was blowing. "I must get home or Uncle will worry."

The dog howled from the bluff and the waves were splashing the legs of the man, who had evidently fallen down the bluff and struck on the stones.

"Maybe he's the man that was shooting partridges," said Ben to himself, and he held the boat by the anchor chain and looked more closely at the man's face.

"Why, it's the Her—it's the Hermit!" Ben exclaimed, with only the dog to hear.

Ben was smitten with sorrow and did not know what he should do. Maybe the Hermit was not quite dead and Ben should go for a doctor. But the Hermit looked dead. Ben

could not bear to leave, with the waves coming up and washing over the Hermit, yet what good could Ben do there? The black clouds were rolling in the west and there were lightning flashes and darkness coming, for the days had become shorter. Then Ben had an idea. He could take the Hermit in the boat and land at Old Man Westby's, which was the nearest place. He would not leave the Hermit. Ben wished he had the Hermit's splendid boat, which was smooth built and dry inside and shone in three coats of spar varnish and had a keel and rode the water so gracefully that when the Hermit rowed it you watched it out of sight. He had only Uncle Erickson's old tub, wet in the bottom and hard to row, but he would take the Hermit's body; the Hermit had been his friend.

Ben pulled the boat sideways to the beach. Then he ran up the beach to where pine trees stood and broke off branches, with which he filled the back part of the boat. As he was carrying the pine branches he thought of the

Hermit at the spruce tree, the Hermit, who was so strong and strange and beyond understanding—Ben's friend, who had encouraged him more than anybody else in the world. He would have pine boughs in the boat, even if it was as dark as a stack of black cats before he reached Westby's landing-place. The Hermit would have done as much for him.

Ben, half terrified and wet to the skin, had dragged the boat near and was trying to lift the Hermit's shoulders when the Hermit opened his eyes. Then the Hermit sat up.

"What are the pine boughs for?" the Hermit asked after he had got his mind to working.

"I was going to row you over to Westby's," answered Ben. "I thought you were dead."

"Dead men don't feel anything," said the Hermit, smiling.

"That wouldn't make any difference," said Ben, in some embarrassment. "I wanted the

boat to be easy and I remembered you liked pines and spruces."

"Every man is foolish," said the Hermit, and Ben could not tell what was coming next. "Every man is foolish; if not in one way then in another. A six-year old boy ought to be spanked for being as foolish as I was. This is really no place for a man weighing two hundred pounds to be."

The Hermit was sitting with both feet in the water and seemed to be amused.

The Hermit asked Ben if he had heard a shot fired that afternoon. Ben recalled hearing the shot. It was a hunter, the Hermit said, who had wounded a partridge. The Hermit had caught sight of the bird, on the bluff, and was trying to get his hands on it when the footing gave way and the Hermit had fallen.

"They'd fine you for eating a partridge before the season opens," said Ben.

"I was going to fix it up and make it as good as new," explained the Hermit.

The Hermit said that the fall did not appear to have done him any good and he let Ben row the boat to Westby's.

The Hermit was all right, but Bill Olson, Old Man Westby and Uncle Erickson just happened to drop in at the Hermit's the next evening. Bill Olson came pussyfooting through the bushes, looking right and left, as if not yet satisfied with a place to build his cottage next summer, and Old Man Westby came along the path, stiff and upright with his cane. Uncle Erickson was there, his face black with a week's growth of beard, which added at least ten years to his age in appearance.

"We might be using that telescope of yours to find out what planet you were making your home on now," remarked Westby, lifting his cane and letting it fall.

"I fell all right," said the Hermit. "Just a little gymnastics."

"Ought to be railings around the top of these bluffs," suggested Bill Olson. "A person—it might be a lady—might easily fall down one of

these high places. There's no telling what might happen."

"Might put a fence around wounded partridges," proposed Westby, slapping his knees, while his cane fell to his bosom.

"You say you feel all right," said Uncle Erickson. "I wouldn't be too sure about that. You might feel all right for a day or two—be going around as usual and drop dead."

"Say, that boy, Ben Long, did not do so bad," ejaculated Bill Olson. "He was going to load you in his boat and pull in."

"He's a tiptop boy," said Old Man Westby. "All the boys around here are tiptop boys."

But no one knew what Ben was thinking of most when he found the Hermit at the foot of the bluff. It was what the Hermit once said,—"Who knows but Ben Long will be a great man?" That was what Ben kept thinking about over and over. And that was what started him off to study books, and he hoped

the Hermit would not fall off another bluff until there had been time for a boy to show not what education will do for a fellow but what a fellow will do with education.

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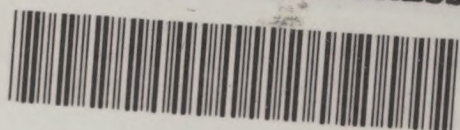
Not a rambling, hap-hazard collection but a vade-mecum for youth from the ages of six or seven to sixteen or seventeen. It opens with Nursery Rhymes and lullabies, progresses through child rhymes and jingles to more mature nonsense verse; then come fairy verses and Christmas poems; then nature verse and favorite rhymed stories; then through the trumpet and drum period (where an attempt is made to teach true patriotism) to the final appeal of "Life Lessons" and "A Garland of Gold" (the great poems for all ages).

This arrangement secures sequence of sentiment and a sort of cumulative appeal. Nearly all the children's classics are included, and along with them a body of verse not so well known but almost equally deserving. There are many real "finds," most of which have never before appeared in any anthology.

Mr. Stevenson has banished doleful and pessimistic verse, and has dwelt on hope, courage, cheerfulness and helpfulness. The book should serve, too, as an introduction to the greater poems, informing taste for them and appreciation of them, against the time when the boy or girl, grown into youth and maiden, is ready to swim out into the full current of English poetry.

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